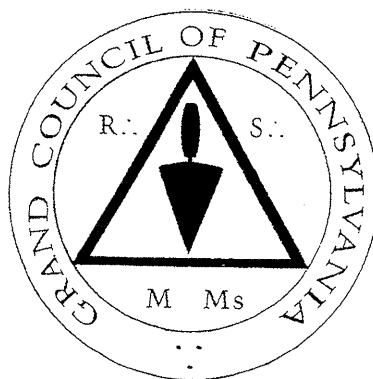
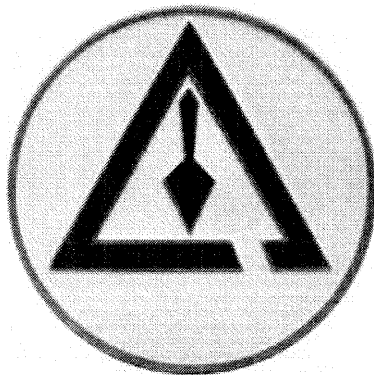


A History
of
The Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons
and
the Cryptic Rite of Pennsylvania





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Foreword

The Cryptic Rite is perhaps the most beautiful of all the degree systems of Freemasonry, with its Degrees of Preservation and the lessons learned through the allegory of the Secret Vault. These Cryptic degrees are the Alpha and Omega of Freemasonry with the Royal Master Mason Degree being the first degree of Ancient Craft Masonry and the Select Master Mason Degree being the last. As such, the wisdom and beauty of the Cryptic Rite are not to be missed by any true Mason wishing to complete his Masonic education by passing the Circle of Perfection of our beloved Craft.

Although the Cryptic Rite finds its origin in the side degrees of the Rite of Perfection of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, our Cryptic Rite is distinctly American. In the years between the Revolutionary War and 1820, men of vision and devotion to Freemasonry would reconfigure and reintroduce the Royal Master and Select Master degrees across the former British colonies, setting in motion our American Cryptic Rite. Grand Council jurisdictions would be formed and in the succeeding years these degrees would find their way into Pennsylvania by way of New York and Ohio, initiating events that in 1847 would culminate in the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania.

This history, while not presuming to be the last word on Pennsylvania Cryptic Masonry, presents a synopsis of the origin and history of our Grand Council of Royal and Select Master Masons, along with the three Cryptic degrees conferred in the subordinate councils of the state.

Here is the story of the beginnings of American Cryptic Masonry, with the "hidden" degrees that would take their place in the constellation that is the York Rite of Freemasonry through the efforts of Henry Wilmons, Philip P. Eckles, Jeremy Ladd Cross, and of course, Etienne Morin and Thomas Lownds.

Here also is the genesis of the regal rite of the three Kings, Solomon the wise King of Israel and Hiram the illustrious King of Tyre, in the Royal and Select Master Mason degrees, as well as Zedekiah the last King of Israel, whose downfall is so vividly portrayed in Thomas Lownds' degree of Super Excellent Master Mason.

This is the fascinating and true chronicle of how our Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania came to be.

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Acknowledgments

I am greatly indebted to MPGM William D. Oaks for his kindness in "selecting" me as the person entrusted with writing this history of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons and the Cryptic Rite of Pennsylvania. It is my sincere hope that it fulfills his vision for a history that would be much more than a compilation of dates, meetings, and names of people, but rather a living document shedding light upon our collective past as Cryptic Masons.

A big thank you is due to Cathy Giaimo, the librarian at the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania's circulating library in Philadelphia, who located the many books that were needed to understand and write the history of our Grand Council, as well as her supportive research that helped to make this history possible.

Thanks also to Most Illustrious Companion Bobbie G. Campbell, Grand Recorder of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masons of Ohio, for the important information about the very first Pennsylvania cryptic council under dispensation from the Grand Council of Ohio in 1834, as well as his suggestions for obtaining other archaic documents from that jurisdiction.

Sincere appreciation is offered to Most Puissant Past Grand Master William H. Weichsel (2013), my mentor and advocate in the York Rite of Freemasonry for his timely suggestions, as well as to Bro. William R. Rininger, my advisor and mentor for the Master Masonic Scholar Program, for recognizing the importance of this Cryptic history early-on.

Finally, a huge debt of gratitude is owed to my Kathy, who not only proof-read the developing manuscript many times, but who also supported my conviction of this history's importance while it consumed more than three years of our life together. Her many suggestions and inspiration were truly invaluable in producing this account of my favorite Masonic body of all.

I hope that this "History of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons and the Cryptic Rite in Pennsylvania" is useful to my Illustrious Companions across our state, and I pray that it will encourage us to love and protect what has been entrusted to us, our beautiful Cryptic Rite of Pennsylvania.

-Depositum Custodi -

Very respectfully submitted -

Il. Companion John R. Dinkel, 32°, KYCH, HGA
Master Masonic Scholar

Royal Master's Ode

By Hiram's arts the aspiring dome,
In stately columns shall arise;
All climates were his native home,
His learned actions reach the skies;
Heroes and kings revere his name,
While poets sing his lasting fame.¹

(- from Pratt's Masonic Register - November 1820.)

¹ In all of Pennsylvania Masonic ritual, the degree of Royal Master is our sole opportunity to meet and interact with Grand Master Hiram Abiff while he is depicted alive, prior to his untimely assassination.

A History of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Master Masons and the Cryptic Rite of Pennsylvania

Most Masonic scholars today would agree that the Cryptic Rite of Freemasonry in Pennsylvania, consisting of the degrees of Royal Master Mason, Select Master Mason, and Super Excellent Master Mason had its true beginnings here in America. Although the history of the Cryptic Rite is perhaps more fragmented and convoluted than many other areas of Freemasonry, to correctly understand the history of the Grand Council of Pennsylvania it will be useful to see how these degrees found their way to North America along with the several pathways that led to their introduction.

There are four basic "theories" ⁱ usually advanced to explain the history and origin of our Cryptic Rite. They are:

1. The Berlin theory
2. The Scottish Rite theory
3. The Baltimore theory
4. The Stuart theory.

Each of these has had its supporters, but the recorded history of the degrees that would become our American Cryptic Rite system reveals a substantial overlap in time and place, with multiple modes of introduction into the United States. The first three of these theories document events occurring between the years of 1761 - 1818, with each playing an important part in the genesis of what we now call our Cryptic Rite of Preservation.

It is important to understand that in the 18th and 19th centuries Masonic degrees were not institutionalized as they are today, with as many as 700 different degrees from several systems in existence in the world at that time. Travel was difficult, dangerous, and costly; nonetheless, many degrees were conferred by itinerant Masonic lecturers for a fee, with or without the lawful authority to do so, and many such lecturers made their living in this way. Still other lecturers were appointed by various Grand bodies to teach and confer degrees, and were also empowered to constitute Masonic bodies wherever needed by issuing forms of authorization from the proper Masonic authorities.

***The Berlin theory** suggests that the Scottish Rite system of degrees in France derived its authority from Frederick II, King of Prussia, who was the Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander of the 33rd Degree in Berlin, Germany, where the Supreme Grand East of the Ineffable Degrees was then held.ⁱⁱ This would mean that Etienne Morin's authority, although given in Paris, France, necessarily derived from that source in Berlin. Originally consisting of only seven degrees, this system was expanded to twenty-five degrees in what became known as the Right of Perfection (including the Rite of Heredomⁱⁱⁱ ^{iv}), or the Rite of the Royal Secret (Morin's Rite). In addition, two German-American Masons named Henry Wilmons and Philip P. Eckles would ultimately play a central role in the origination of our Cryptic degree of Select Master Mason in America.

***The Scottish Rite theory** of the origin of the Cryptic Rite seems to provide the most extensive historical record of our four theories. Dr. Albert Gallatin Mackey, a renowned Masonic historian and scholar who lived from 1807 - 1881 wrote that the original Royal Master and Select Master Degrees were, "without doubt honorary or side degrees which were controlled and conferred by Inspectors General of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite". At that time the (Scottish) Rite of Perfection consisted of twenty-five degrees, but there were also numerous "side" or honorary degrees, bringing the total to fifty-three.

Chart #1A - The Scottish Rite Theory

Etienne (Steven) Morin (1717-1771)

Named Inspector General for the 25 degree² Rite of Perfection (Scottish Rite) in the New World by the Council of Emperors of the East and West in Paris 1761.

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Henry Andrew Francken (-1795)

Named Deputy Inspector General and established a Lodge of Perfection in Albany, NY, in 1767 - this is the first time that the 4-14^o Rite of Perfection was conferred in America in the British Colonies.³

Along with Morin produced a manuscript detailing the 15^o - 25^o in 1771.

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Moses Michael Hays (1739-1805)

Appointed by Francken Deputy Inspector General for W. Indies and North America 1768, and who lived in Charleston, S. C. from 1778-1781.

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Isaac De Costa (-1783)

Following his appointment as Deputy Inspector General founded and formed the Scottish Rite bodies of Charlestown, S.C. that would become the Supreme Council of the 33rd^o of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, which would be organized in Charleston, S.C. on May 31, 1801 and from which all recognized Scottish Rite bodies in the United States have their origin.

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Moses M. Hays also appointed Berend M. Spitzer in 1781 -- see Chart #1B ----->

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Joseph M. Myers

Appointed Deputy Inspector General by Hays in 1788 to replace De Costa after his death in 1783.

Myers travelled extensively for his mercantile business and conferred both the Select and Royal Master Degrees (AASR) in at least nine states, while selling Masonic regalia and paraphernalia for Rite of Perfection Degrees.

It is said that he deposited written degrees for both Royal and Select Master Degrees (AASR) in Charleston, S.C. in 1788, proof that he had possession of both.

² Most Masonic historians believe that Morins's Rite contained twenty-five degrees not just fourteen degrees. Morin and Francken produced manuscripts detailing the degrees from 15-25 in 1771, and these are bound in a reprinted volume available from the AASR Northern Masonic Jurisdiction.

³ In his original work "Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Frankreich" (History of Freemasonry in France) published in 1852-1853 Georg Franz Burkhard Kloss, a German historian of Freemasonry listed the 5th degree of this system as the degree of Select Master, one of the oldest written references to make use of this name.

Among these recognized side degrees were listed the Select Master Degree and the Royal Master Degree, neither of which were connected in any other way with one another until about 1818.

Both side degrees and the original Rite of Perfection had been brought to America by Etienne (Steven) Morin, who had been made a Mason in Loge La Francaise in Bordeaux, France around 1741. After travelling to the French West Indies, Morin, authorized by Letters Patent given to him in Paris, set up an Ecossais Chapter in San Domingo, a French colony on the island of Hispaniola. Following a trip back to France where he obtained a further Patent of Authority^v for Masonic bodies all through the New World, Morin returned to San Domingo in 1763 with the intention of promoting the Rite of Perfection throughout the hemisphere.^{vi} Morin would add several embellishments to the Rite of Perfection, and call his resulting system "The Rite of the Royal Secret".

Among the several Deputy Inspectors General subsequently appointed by Steven Morin was one Henry Andrew Francken^{vii} (see Chart 1A). Francken travelled to New York in 1767 where he granted a patent dated December 26th of that year, for the formation of a Lodge of Perfection at Albany. This marked the first time the Degrees of Perfection (4th through 14th) were conferred in any of the thirteen British colonies. This patent, and the early minutes of the Lodge, are still extant and are in the archives of Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in Lexington, Massachusetts. Francken's patent would also have controlled the side degrees in existence at that time. According to the Grand Council of New York's Grand Assembly Proceedings from 1861, "....the side degrees, including the Select Master, Royal Master, Mark Master, Grand Patriarch, Most Excellent Master, and Super-Excellent Master were never cultivated to any great extent in New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island" as they were in Charlestown, South Carolina after 1782.

Another of Morin's Deputy Inspectors General was Moses Michael Hays, who commissioned Isaac De Costa in 1781 as one of his Deputies charged to establish the Rite in other countries of the New World following Morin's death. De Costa also formed several Scottish Rite bodies in Charleston, S. C. in 1783, which would together become the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR) in 1801.

The oldest document mentioning the degree of Select Master is a certificate dated November 8, 1790 in which Moses Cohen, Grand Inspector General in 1794 (who derived his authority through Berend Moses Spitzer, Moses M. Hays, and Etienne Morin) certified that he had previously conferred several degrees including the "Select Master of Twenty Seven" on one Abraham Jacobs. This degree is now understood to be essentially the same as our Select Master Mason Degree, after having been rewritten by Philip P. Eckles in Baltimore, Maryland. (See the Baltimore Theory below, as well as Chart #4.)

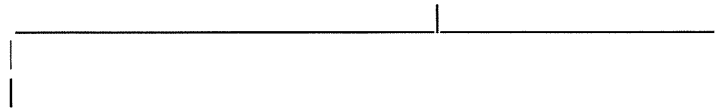
Abraham Jacobs would go on to confer the Royal Master Degree upon Thomas Lownds in 1806. Lownds would then rewrite the Royal Master Degree and further develop it in New York, while the Select Master Degree was being vigorously promoted by Philip Eckles in Baltimore, Maryland.

Eckles himself always claimed that the first Grand Council of Select Masters was formed in Baltimore by Henry Wilmons, in 1792. It is also well known that a Grand Council of Royal Masters, Columbian No. 1, was organized in 1810 in New York by Thomas Lownds. The Select Master and Royal Master degrees, both rewritten and embellished, would thereafter be disseminated across several jurisdictions, each within their own separate councils.

Chart #1B - The Scottish Rite Theory

Berend Moses Spitzer

Appointed Deputy Inspector General by Moses Michael Hays June 25, 1781



John Mitchell

Deputy Inspector General appointed in 1795. On May 31, 1801, Mitchell presided over the opening of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the United States of America, with D.I.G. Frederick Delcho. This is considered the Mother Council of the World from which all regular Scottish Rite bodies have their origin and authority. The founding fathers of the Supreme Council are now known as "The Eleven Gentlemen from Charleston".

Hyman Isaac Long

Deputy Inspector General
Appointed January 11, 1795

Moses Cohen

Inspector General 1794

Abraham Jacobs

Received "Select Master of 27" from Moses Cohen

Thomas Lownds (1762-1825)

Received the Rite of Perfection and the Royal Master Degree from Jacobs in 1806.⁴ In 1810 Lownds would help organize a Council of Royal Masters called the Columbia Grand Council #1 which established strong ties to the Holy Royal Arch by 1818. Most Masonic scholars believe that Lownds himself rewrote the Royal Master Degree as well as authored the Super Excellent Master Degree (not the British degree of the same name). Lownds presided over the first conferral of the S. E. M.'s Degree in his Columbia Grand Council of Royal Masters #1 on December 22, 1817 in New York, tying both Royal Master and Super Excellent Degrees together for the first time anywhere.

*

Such great Masonic statesmen as Philip P. Eckles and Hezekiah Niles have stated that "...to Lownds and Wilmot⁵ we may directly trace all of the Cryptic Masonry now in use in either hemisphere".

- this is from an undated document bearing both men's signatures probably from before 1825. (see chart #2)

⁴ During the Cerneau controversy (1808-1813), Lownds would side with and associate with Joseph Cerneau, although he had received his Rite of Perfection and Royal Master Degree from Abraham Jacobs, whose authority came from Steven Morin through Moses Michael Hays and Berend Moses Spitzer, and not from Cerneau. Some sources suggest that during the Cerneau controversy Lownds and others "detached" the Royal & Select Master degrees from the Scottish Rite side degrees, giving Lownds the opportunity and incentive to rewrite the Royal Master degree for the burgeoning Cryptic Rite.

⁵ Apparently an alternate spelling for Henry Wilmons. Columbian Council #1 is also found spelled Columbia Council #1.

It would then fall to Jeremy Ladd Cross of Connecticut to combine the two degrees into one system. On March 21, 1818, Cross visited Middletown, Connecticut, where he "communicated the two degrees of Royal and Select Master" together, according to his personal diary, suggesting that the two degrees had been incorporated by him into the beginnings of a system that would become the Cryptic Rite. Jeremy Cross is "generally acknowledged to be the founder of the Cryptic Rite system",^{viii} but this assertion is not without its problems despite its merits as we will see.^{ix}

On December 22, 1817, the first conferral of the degree of Super Excellent Master is recorded in the minutes of Columbian (Grand) Council #1 Royal Masters, presided over by Thomas Lownds. This degree, which is not related to the British degrees with a similar name, was almost certainly authored by Thomas Lownds, although its exact origin remains in question.

***The Baltimore theory** - In Schulz's "History of Freemasonry in Maryland, Volume I", we see that "Henry Wilmons^x erected in the City of Baltimore in 1792 a Grand Council of Select Masters. By a lawful succession, the powers exercised by Henry Wilmons were transferred to Philip P. Eckles and to Hezekiah Niles", but there is no further independent corroboration of the details. What we do know is that Philip Eckles always believed himself to be the lawful and sole custodian of the Select Master Degree after the death of Henry Wilmons in 1795, because he himself had re-written the degree.

Thomas Smith Webb, who has been called the Founding Father of the American York Rite, was Grand Master of Masons of Rhode Island (1813-1814). Along with others, he helped form the Grand Chapter of Rhode Island, serving as its Grand High Priest from 1804-1814. It has been suggested that his best lecturing pupil was Jeremy Ladd Cross who would disseminate the Select Master Degree, and also after 1818 the Royal Master Degree among Royal Arch Chapters in nine states as the Grand Lecturer of the Grand Chapter of Maryland, and also the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons. Cross thereby set the stage for a far-reaching controversy as to who actually controlled the degrees of Royal Master and Select Master - the Cryptic Councils, the Royal Arch Chapters, or the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, all of whom simultaneously claimed that authority. (To silence his critics, Jeremy Ladd Cross would later produce a document purportedly signed by both Philip Eckles and Hezekiah Niles authorizing him [Cross] to confer both the Select Master and Royal Master Degrees, but some authorities [Josiah H. Drummond and J. K. Stapleton in 1847] believe this document was in fact forged by Cross himself for financial reasons, so it cannot be taken as corroborative.)

***The Stuart theory** - This theory examines the notion that the Cryptic Rite was invented by the exiled English Stuart family and their adherents to disguise their outlawed meetings and plots while planning their return to the English throne. Unfortunately, while this may appear to be a well thought out theory, there is absolutely no hard documentary proof that this theory is true. The Stuarts in French exile could have adopted rather than invented the Masonic "Hauts Grades" degrees for their own political purposes, but the Stuart line had died out by 1714, nearly fifty years before Steven Morin brought his Rite of the Royal Secret to the Americas. To contend that the Stuarts devised these Eccosais side degrees is simply not credible when we consider all the other evidence for the origins of what would become the Cryptic Rite. While the degree rituals could possibly be made to serve as a concealment for their outlawed political movement, our other three theories have far more historical provenance and actual documentation to recommend them as the true origin of the Cryptic Rite.

* With the foregoing in mind, we can confidently suggest that the true origin of the Cryptic Rite in America is found in the convergence between the Berlin, Scottish Rite, and Baltimore connections; all three are in operation in different locations at the same time, and we must especially note that the three originating degrees have all been rewritten by Eckles and Lownds for the Cryptic Rite by 1817. *

Chart # 2 -- The Baltimore Theory

Henry Wilmons

Silver Key Lodge (Bremen, Germany)

Moved to Charleston, S.C. in 1788, then moved to Baltimore, Maryland where he established a Grand Council of Select Masters in 1792.⁶

In 1794 Wilmons became the Grand Master of Masons for Maryland.

Philip P. Eckles

(also of German descent - came to the US about 1781)

Received the Select Master Degree from Henry Wilmons around 1795 and then took this Select Master Degree and elaborated on it in Baltimore while self-styling himself as the "Thrice Illustrious and Grand Puissant in Grand Council of Select Masons of Baltimore". It should be noted that Eckles clearly considered himself as the sole and rightful custodian of the Select Master Degree after the death of Henry Wilmons in 1795.

Eckles would confer his degree of Select Master upon Jeremy Ladd Cross, Thomas Smith Webb's lecturing pupil, in 1816.

Eckles received the Royal Master Degree from one Ebenezer Wadsworth in NY in 1819, so from that time Eckles had possession of both Royal and Select Master Degrees.

Thomas Smith Webb (1771-1819)

Called the Founding Father of the York or American Rite of Freemasonry for his tireless promotion of these Masonic bodies.

Grand Master of Masons of Rhode Island (1813-1814), Webb aided in the formation of the Grand Chapter of Rhode Island, serving as its Grand High Priest from 1804-14.

Elected first Grand Commander of what is now the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar and the Appendant Orders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

With others, he eventually organized the General Grand Royal Arch Chapter of the United States in 1797, and was guiding its operations as Deputy Grand High Priest at the time of his death.

The crowning glory of Webb's Masonic career was the formation of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States which he accomplished in 1816 in New York City.

It has been suggested that Jeremy Cross was Thomas Smith Webb's best lecturing pupil.

Jeremy Ladd Cross (1783 -1861)

Entered into Freemasonry in 1808, Cross received the Select Master Degree from Philip Eckles in the fall of 1816 before Eckles himself had received the Royal Master Degree.

Cross then asked for and received permission⁷ to disseminate the Select Master Degree among the Royal Arch Chapters after being named the General Grand Lecturer of Grand Chapters of Maryland, Connecticut, and perhaps the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in New York.⁸

In 1818 Cross came into possession of the Royal Master Degree, and thereafter he enlarged upon his permission previously granted to disseminate the Select Master Degree by adding the Royal Master Degree - he also began to grant charters for Councils of Royal and Select Masters without receiving legal authority or permission.

In 1819 Cross published a monitor pamphlet of both Royal and Select Master Degrees as a guide for all the Councils of Royal & Select Masters in existence at that time.

⁶ Wilmons' authority is thought to originate from having been a Scottish Rite Inspector General while in Germany.

⁷ Probably from Philip Eckles and Hezekiah Niles, but possibly from Thomas Smith Webb as well.

⁸ Josiah Drummond, "The Cryptic Rite: Its Origin and Introduction on This Continent", 1888, Chapter IV.

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Let us now consider how the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania came to be.^{xi} As previously shown, in 1767 a Lodge of Perfection was founded by Henry A. Francken, Deputy Inspector General in Albany, New York, having the side degrees of Select Master and Royal Master. Columbian (Grand) Council #1 Royal Masters (also found spelled Columbia #1) was then chartered to Thomas Lownds and others in New York in 1810, and a Council of Select Masters was founded by Philip P. Eckles and Hezekiah Niles in 1821, also in New York. The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of New York was subsequently formed on January 25, 1823.

Under this unimpeachable authority, a charter was granted in January of 1827 by the Grand Council of New York to Hiram Council (possibly King Hiram Council) at Cleveland, Ohio. The Cryptic degrees were well received in Ohio, and within three years interest would grow to the point that the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masons of Ohio was formed on January 6, 1830 by delegates of five Ohio councils - this Grand Council still exists today. In 1834, the Grand Council of Ohio then issued a dispensation for a Council of Royal and Select Masters to meet in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but the records of this first Council appear to have been lost, and nothing further is known.

Nevertheless, the Cryptic Rite had taken root in Western Pennsylvania, because on October 26, 1847 an organizational meeting was held in the city of Pittsburgh, for the purpose of deciding whether a Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania should be formed. Officers were recommended, and a resolution was passed to form the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania.

The Grand Council was therefore organized with these officers:

Most Excellent Alex McCammon, Grand Puissant.
 M. E. W. W. Wilson, Deputy Grand Puissant.
 M. E. J. S. Hoon, Grand Thrice Illustrious Master
 M. E. C. W. Ricketson, Grand Principal Conductor of Work
 M. E. Samuel McKinley, Grand Recorder.
 M. E. Thomas Sargent, Grand Treasurer.
 M. E. James Stevens, Grand Captain of the Guard
 M. E. S. B. Cooper, Grand Sentinel.

On December 6, 1847, these officers were elected and installed, and the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania began its work with a Constitution, Bylaws, and three constituent councils.

The three newly chartered councils were called:

Washington Council #1, Washington, PA;
 Mt. Moriah Council #2, Pittsburgh, PA;
 and Lone Star Council #3 of Washington, Texas.

One year later, on December 7, 1848, these same Grand officers, having performed their duties with devotion, were unanimously re-elected to another one year term of office.

On December 8, 1849, the following Grand officers were elected:

Most Excellent W.W. Wilson, Grand Puissant.
 M. E. James S. Hoon, Deputy Grand Puissant.
 M. E. C. W. Ricketson, Grand Thrice Illustrious Master
 M. E. James Stevens, Grand Principal Conductor of Work
 M. E. S. B. Cooper, Grand Captain of the Guard
 M. E. Phillip Ross, Grand Treasurer
 M. E. T. W. Wright, Grand Recorder

Earlier that same year, some of the Grand officers of the Grand Council had received the "Ineffable Degrees" (4 - 14° of the AASR), afterwards expressing some doubts as to whether the Royal and Select Master Degrees did not more properly belong to the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite instead of the Grand Council.

Troubled by this dilemma, the Grand Puissant appointed a series of committees to study the problem over the next five years, but they were unable to come to a consensus so the problem languished without a definitive conclusion.

On February 3, 1854, the officers of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania, without consulting or conferring with their constituent councils in any way, surrendered their authority over the Royal and Select Master Degrees to the Grand Council of the Princes of Jerusalem, Scottish Rite.

This act put the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters in the untenable position of retaining control over their subordinate Cryptic councils, but without having control over the two Cryptic degrees. This also completely ignored the fact that both the Royal and Select Master Degrees in use by the Grand Council were degrees that had been rewritten, the Select Master Degree by Philip P. Eckles in Baltimore, Maryland in 1795, along with the Royal Master Degree by Thomas Lownds in New York after 1810.

To add to the confusion, that same February 3rd evening, the Grand Council of Princes of Jerusalem issued a charter for a new Council of Royal & Select Masters named "Van Rensselaer Council #1",^{xii} meeting in the city of Pittsburgh, thereby supplanting the remaining authority of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters by assuming control over the process of issuing new Council charters.

The Pennsylvania Councils, aware of this paradox, and not being in agreement with or recognizing the act of their Grand Council officers, called for a meeting to dispute this surrender of authority.

The requested meeting took place on December 30, 1854, in Masons Hall in Washington, PA, and as a result the Pennsylvania councils immediately elected twelve new Grand officers, including Bro. Alfred Creigh from Washington Council #1 as the Most Puissant Grand Master.^{xiii}

The newly elected Grand officers with their new titles were:

Most Puissant Alfred Creigh, Grand Master.
 Right Puissant William Wolf, Deputy Grand Master.
 R. P. J. B. Musser, Grand Thrice Illustrious Master

(con't)

R. P. William Hart, Grand Principal Conductor of Work
 R. P. John R. Griffith, Grand Treasurer
 R. P. William Boardman, Grand Recorder
 R. P. H. H. Frisbie, Grand Lecturer
 R. P. James M. Byers, Grand Captain of the Guard
 R. P. & Rev. S. P. Dorsey, Grand Chaplain
 R. P. William McKahan, Grand Marshal
 R. P. W. R. Terry, Grand Steward
 R. P. James S. Bushfield, Grand Sentinel

A new Constitution and new Bylaws were adopted and published, and the newly reconstituted Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of the State of Pennsylvania began issuing regular charters. In other words, this Grand Cryptic Council continued doing the proper work of a Grand Council despite the doings of the Council of the Princes of Jerusalem (AASR).

On April 10, 1855 Green Council #3, Waynesburg, PA took the place of Lone Star #3 (Texas) which had disappeared from the historical record in Pennsylvania.

Also, following this reconstitution, Van Rensselaer Council #1 surrendered its Charter back to the Princes of Jerusalem and most of its members became affiliated with Mt. Moriah Council #2 meeting in Pittsburgh, PA.

Further annual Grand assemblies were held in Pittsburgh (1856), Harrisburg (1857), and Philadelphia (1858). In 1858, M.P. Grand Master Creigh was requested to prepare a Manual of Cryptic Masonry for publication, and a committee was formed to execute this request. This was successfully completed and accepted the same year, and was also published along with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of the State of Pennsylvania. This manual is the ancestor of the current ritual manual that is issued by the Grand Council of Royal and Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania (2013 version).

Also in 1858, new Charters were issued to the eleven Councils under the jurisdiction of the Grand Council of Pennsylvania according to the date of their original organization, pursuant to a resolution from the Harrisburg Annual Assembly of 1857, which had requested Grand Master Creigh to report on all of the Pennsylvania Councils with their original dates of organization, to facilitate a re-chartering of the same.

After the re-chartering, the Subordinate Councils were as follows:

Washington Council #1, Washington, Nov. 16, 1847
 Mt. Moriah Council #2, Pittsburgh, June 5, 1848
 Greene Council #3, Waynesburg, April 10, 1855
 Fayette Council #4, Brownsville, April 16, 1855
 St. John's Council #5, Carlisle, December 28, 1855
 Uniontown Council #6, Uniontown, January 28, 1856
 Parke Council #7, Harrisburg, April 29, 1856
 Palestine Council #8, Pottstown, May 29, 1856
 Mountain Council #9, Altoona, December 16, 1857
 Mt. Moriah Council #10, Bloomsburg, December 25, 1857
 Philadelphia Council #11, Philadelphia, June 24, 1858.

At the Thirteenth Annual Assembly held in Altoona on June 22, 1859, the M.P. Grand Master Creigh recommended that a suitable jewel be designed for wear by Cryptic Masons, the designing of which was then referred to a committee of three Illustrious Companions. The committee returned with a recommendation that the emblem consist of "a circular gold medal about one inch in diameter; upon one side should be a triangle with a trowel in the center, somewhat raised from the surface of the medal; upon a raised rim or band of sufficient width surrounding the outer edge should be engraved the name of the member above, and below the triangle, the name of the Council in Roman figures (sic). On the reverse side there should be a similar raised rim having engraved upon it the letters **R.: SE.: SM.:**^{xiv} and beneath this the word 'Pennsylvania'. Within the rim, upon the depressed surface there should be represented the rays of the sun radiating from the center in which are contained the Greek letters Alpha (A) and Omega (Ω). The medal is to be fastened by a ribbon of purple color, passing through a Keystone."^{xv} The report of the committee was accepted, and the medal was adopted by the Grand Council of Pennsylvania.

In 1863, during the Seventeenth Annual Assembly of the Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania held in Greensburg, Westmoreland County, Most Puissant Grand Master Creigh submitted "an interesting correspondence between one Il. Comp. W. B. Moore, the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Massachusetts and himself", regarding the idea of incorporating the Degree of Super Excellent Master as a regular degree within Cryptic Masonry. M. P. Grand Master Creigh also suggested that the State of Pennsylvania might constructively be divided into nine Arches or districts, over which three Ghiblinites should be appointed to oversee the councils in each district. These two issues were then sent to a committee and bound over to the next (18th) Annual Assembly to be held in Carlisle, PA on June 15, 1864.

At the Carlisle Annual Assembly, the committee appointed reported on the two issues, and offered a resolution asking that the degree of Super Excellent Master be accepted as part of the Cryptic Rite, that the Constitution of the Grand Council be amended to show this, and that Grand Master Creigh issue an edict to the effect that all subordinate Councils would henceforth accept and confer this degree as the second degree in the order of conferral. The resolution also recommended that the M. P. Grand Master be authorized to divide the State of Pennsylvania into nine districts or Arches, each having the suggested Ghiblinites, whose duties were to be clearly set forth in the Constitution of the Grand Council.

The Grand Council authorized the resolution,^{xvi} and requested the Grand Master to take such steps found necessary to procure funds to publish the Grand Council's proceedings, and to furnish new Charters on parchment for Subordinate Councils. It was also agreed that when the degrees were conferred in the Grand Council that the required fees should be paid into the hands of the M. P. Grand Master to be used as a contingency fund.

The Nineteenth Annual Assembly of the Grand Council of Royal, Super Excellent, and Select Masters of the State of Pennsylvania was convened in Altoona on June 15, 1865, with "Super Excellent" now prominently added to the official designation for the Grand Council. The order of degree conferral, however, was once again changed by the time of the 47th Annual Grand Assembly in 1892 to place the degree of Super Excellent Master as the third or last degree conferred in the Cryptic Rite.^{xvii} The title of the Grand Council had also reverted to that of "Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania", and the nine State divisions had become nine districts with each having but one overseer, the Puissant District Deputy Grand Master appointed to that Cryptic district.

It is also interesting to note that the official symbol of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania is different now from that authorized in 1859. Today's Grand Council symbol retains the triangle and trowel within the circle, with **R.:**, **S.:**, and **MMs** along the rim, however no trace of "Super Excellent" remains upon this official symbol or logo, even though the degree of Super Excellent Master Mason remains a necessary and valuable part of the work of our Cryptic Rite in Pennsylvania. The Council of R & S Masters members' medallion authorized from 1859 is also no longer available, but the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania has for many years authorized a Past Thrice Illustrious Master's jewel for those who have attained this select and honored position within their subordinate Council.

Today the work of the forty subordinate Councils of Royal and Select Master Masons in Pennsylvania is conducted under the Select Master Mason Degree, using the sign of this degree and a secret word which is passed to verify that all present are Select Master Masons. The council also reviews the nine signs of York Rite Masonry from Entered Apprentice Mason to Select Master Mason during the council's opening ceremony, demonstrating to the council members the nine degrees of the Circle of Perfection of Ancient Craft Masonry.^{xviii} (Note: Pennsylvania Masonry does not recognize the Chapter degree of Past Master Virtual (5th Degree) as do some other Capitular jurisdictions.)

The Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons has continued to meet on an annual basis in different parts of the state right up to the present day, thus cementing its claim of sole authority over its Cryptic Councils and all Cryptic degree work within the state of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Cryptic degrees of Royal Master Mason and Select Master Mason (along with the Super Excellent Master Mason Degree), bookend the story of our Masonic Craft from first to last, with the Royal Master Mason Degree considered the first degree of Ancient Craft Masonry and the Select Master Mason Degree the last. They are therefore denominated the Alpha and Omega of Ancient Craft Masonry within our York Rite Cryptic system.

The Super Excellent Master Mason Degree is the final degree within our York Rite system that is taken from the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, if we do not consider the Order of the Red Cross of the Commandery of Knights Templar, which unlike the rest of the York Rite is open only to Christian Masons who have received the Capitular degrees of the Chapter, most essentially the Royal Arch Mason Degree.

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The capstone of the Cryptic Rite is an honorific Order for distinguished members of the Council known as the "Order of the Silver Trowel" conferred on current and Past Thrice Illustrious Masters by a special Masonic Council of Anointed Kings, which is most often encountered at the Annual Assembly of Royal and Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania.^{xix} This honor has been conferred in Pennsylvania since the institution and chartering of our Council of Anointed Kings on January 4, 1947 by the Officers of the Council of Anointed Kings of Ohio. It bears repeating that the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masons of Ohio has earned a special standing with the Grand Council of Pennsylvania - not only did Ohio charter the first Pennsylvania Council in 1834, but they were also the chartering Masonic body that brought the Council of Anointed Kings to our state. In addition, for nearly forty years both Grand Councils have maintained and enjoyed an annual collaboration known as "Penn-Ohio Day" during which the Grand Councils of both states share and exchange their Cryptic degrees using cast members from each jurisdiction to exemplify their respective Grand Council's work.

In Pennsylvania Cryptic Masonry, the Degrees of Royal and Select Master Mason together are known as the Degrees of Preservation. Time within the Cryptic Rite is shown as "Anno Depositionis" (A. Dep.) meaning "In the year of the Deposit", and is determined by using as a starting point the year in which the Temple of Solomon was completed. This is therefore calculated by adding 1000 years to the current date, viz 2017 AD = 3017 A. Dep.

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It is a matter of historical record worth noting that on August 23, 1880 a General Convention was convened in Detroit, Michigan with nineteen of the twenty-eight existing American Grand Councils represented. These Grand Council delegates voted to establish a coordinating body to be named the "General Grand Council of R & S Masters" (now Cryptic Masons, International).^{xx} (Appendix - E)

Representatives from the Grand Council of Pennsylvania were among those who did not attend, the issue of Cryptic control in Pennsylvania having already been conclusively decided during their reconstitution of 1854. Today, eight American Grand Councils still remain recognized but unaffiliated with the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons, International including the Grand Council of Pennsylvania,^{xxi} along with the Grand Councils in England and Wales, Eastern Canada, Ontario, and Scotland. The General Grand Council continues to assign an "Ambassador" to the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania and other unaffiliated Grand Councils as of 2017.

This General Grand Council, in its comprehensive two volume "History of the Cryptic Rite", published extensive information on the so-called "Mississippi Plan" (of 1870) which had caused dissention between the Grand Councils for so many years. In effect, this plan suggested that all those Masons who had previously received the Royal Master and Select Master Degrees in Chapters of Royal Arch Masons were legal and authorized, not spurious and clandestine, and should be recognized as Cryptic Masons, especially in those states that had no Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters; and furthermore, that since some Chapters of Royal Arch Masons had been conferring the Royal and Select Master degrees for many years, that these Chapters should be permitted to continue to do so. This would have resulted in the accelerated loss of the Cryptic degrees into the R.A.M. Chapter systems.^{xxii}

The Grand Council of Pennsylvania and the majority of the other Cryptic Grand Councils disagreed, denied recognition to all such clandestine Cryptic Masons until they were healed, and would not allow the plan to be adopted within their Cryptic jurisdictions. When put to a vote in the sixth and final General Convention of Royal & Select Masters in 1880, the Mississippi Plan failed approval, the delegates present agreed to continue the Cryptic Grand Council system, and the (provisional) General Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of the USA came into existence.^{xxiii xxiv} (see Appendix -E)

Yet despite Pennsylvania's avowed disagreement, eastern Pennsylvania Royal Arch Chapters had in fact conferred Cryptic degrees. In preparation for the 50th Anniversary Jubilee year, in a short history of the Grand Council compiled by then Grand Recorder Charles E. Meyer for the 1893 Annual Assembly of Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania, he reported that "...the Royal Master Degree was conferred in Harmony (Royal Arch) Chapter #52 in Philadelphia, on March 1, 1823, on May 15, 1823, and on April 15, 1825 immediately after the degree of Most Excellent Master, (and) by Columbia Chapter #91 (Philadelphia) on May 16, 1827 and February 16, 1842".

Of course this had all occurred in the years prior to organizing the Grand Council of Pennsylvania in 1847, but it appears quite likely that the conferring of Cryptic degrees by eastern Pennsylvania Royal Arch Chapters helped to precipitate the organizing of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of

Pennsylvania in the less populated southwestern part of the state, thereby preventing these degrees from being controlled by Pennsylvania Royal Arch Chapters. During the December 30, 1854 reorganization and reconstitution of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania, the following was resolved by those Cryptic Councils there present:

"Resolution: We regard the degrees of Royal and Select Master (as) peculiarly belonging to Ancient York Masonry, and that they can be conferred in no other manner than that of other Masonic degrees, and in a Council of Royal and Select Masters."

All this suggests that the question regarding who should legally control and confer the Royal and Select Master degrees was at issue in Pennsylvania at least until 1854, and not just in Pennsylvania but in other jurisdictions as well until the final (general) convention of 1880. An example: the annual report of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Ohio to the 47th Annual Assembly of Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania states: "...there had been a concerted effort in 1864 by some of the members of the Grand Cryptic Council of Ohio to relinquish control over the Royal and Select Master degrees to the Grand Holy Royal Arch Chapter of Ohio." The following year, in 1865 at the Annual (Cryptic) Assembly of Ohio, the subordinate cryptic councils "rejected this proposal unanimously", thereby maintaining control over the Royal and Select Master degrees for the Cryptic Rite in Ohio.^{xxv}

In Pennsylvania, the Most Puissant Grand Master still retains the right to "heal" any such Cryptic Masons applying for admission into Pennsylvania councils, and the rubric is referred to in the Thrice Illustrious Master's Installation ceremony.^{xxvi}

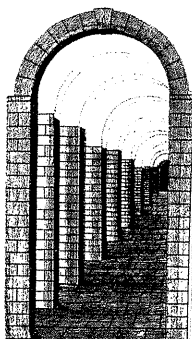
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Since October 26, 1847, the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania has retained full sovereignty, control, and authority over all recognized and authorized Cryptic Councils within the State of Pennsylvania, with the exception of those Cryptic Councils under the discipline of the Prince Hall Affiliation, and the eleven months of disputed authority with the Princes of Jerusalem (AASR) between February 3rd and December 30th of 1854.

The General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons (now called "International") organized on October 24, 1797, relinquished all claims to the Royal and Select Master Degrees in 1853, well before the Mississippi Plan of 1870 was rejected. The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite also renounced by edict all claims to these same degrees in Baltimore in 1870.^{xxvii}

"There is nothing new in the world except the history you do not know."

— M . : W . : Brother Harry S. Truman (1884-1972)



Endnotes:

- ⁱ From the "History of the Cryptic Rite", pub The General Grand Council of R & S Masters of the USA, Volumes I, & II, 1931. (Also suggested by Comp. Michael Post in an article "[Prince Hall Cryptic Masonry](#)", on Grand Council of Ohio website.)
- ⁱⁱ This history is from the "Proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the M. P. Grand Council of R & S Masters of the State of New York" dated June 3, 1857 and also Proceedings dated June 4, 1861. This document refers to Frederick III which should actually be Frederick II.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Joseph Cerneau's original Rite was one of 25-degrees, which he self-increased to 33 degrees; Morin's competing Rite of the Royal Secret - Rite of Perfection had 25-degrees. The first true 33-degree system without side degrees didn't come about until the opening of the Supreme Council of AASR on May 31, 1801 in Charleston, S.C., by "The Eleven Gentlemen From Charleston".
- ^{iv} The six degree Rite of Heredom was absorbed into the Rite of Perfection - source is "[Guardians of the Holy Grail](#)" by Mark A. Pinkham, 2015. Mt. Heredom as used in Freemasonry was an imaginary mountain in Scotland also called Schiehallion, meaning "Fairy Mountain", but which is an actual hill in the Scottish Highlands and is geographically the true center of Scotland.
- ^v Patent dated August 27, 1761 creating him "Grand Inspector for all parts of the New World". This Patent was signed by officials of the Grand Lodge at Paris, and allowed Morin to introduce or confer the degrees in America. Later copies of this Patent appear to have been embellished (probably by Morin) to improve his position over the "high degree" lodges in the West Indies. A second patent was granted in 1763 by the Sovereign Council of the Emperors of the East and West, Grand Consistory of the Princes of the Royal Secret to allow Morin to bring the Rite of Perfection, or as he named it, the "Rite of the Royal Secret" to the entire New World.
- ^{vi} Early writers long believed that a "Rite of Perfection" consisting of 25-degrees, the highest being the "Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret", and being the predecessor of the Scottish Rite, had been formed in Paris by a high degree council calling itself "The Council of Emperors of the East and West". The title "Rite of Perfection" first appeared in the Preface to the "Grand Constitutions of 1786", the authority for which is now thought to be flawed. It is now generally accepted that this Rite of twenty-five degrees was compiled by Etienne Morin and is therefore more properly titled "The Rite of the Royal Secret", or "Morin's Rite". From an article from the websites "Wikipedia" AASR Valley of Washington, D.C. .
- ^{vii} "A Loge de Parfaits d' Écosse was formed on April 12, 1764 at New Orleans, becoming the first "high degree" lodge on the North American continent. Its life, however, was short, as the 1763 Treaty of Paris ceded New Orleans to Spain, and the Catholic Spanish crown had been historically hostile to Freemasonry. Documented Masonic activity ceased for a time and did not return to New Orleans until the 1790s, hence the break in the history of the degrees in question." From the "History of the Cryptic Rite", Volume I (1930).
- ^{viii} From "[The York Rite of Freemasonry - A History and Handbook](#)", pub by The Grand Commandery of Knights Templar USA, 1978.
- ^{ix} From Drummond's History of the Cryptic Rite published in 1888 we find that Jeremy Ladd Cross had been given permission to disseminate the Select Master Degree in Royal Arch Chapters only, but after having received the Royal Master Degree in 1818, began disseminating that degree as well, while also quite illegally issuing charters for R & S Masters Councils. (In consequence of this blatantly contradictory activity Cross was subsequently denied entry into every Masonic body in the State of Pennsylvania, and his degree work was disallowed in that jurisdiction, and in Cross' own words, was also disallowed in the State of Ohio.)
- ^x Also found spelled as Wilmans, Wilmanns, or Wiemans. Wilmons is believed to have been an Inspector General while in Europe.
- ^{xi} See Charts #3 and #4 for the chronological history of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania.
- ^{xii} Probably for Stephen Van Rensselaer, the Grand Master of Masons of the State of New York from 1825 to 1829.
- ^{xiii} He would serve until 1869. In 1870 Creigh was appointed as Divisional Inspector General of the Imperial, Ecclesiastic, and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine and would introduce that Masonic Order into the USA by way of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- ^{xiv} From this we must deduce that although the Super Excellent Master degree was not yet fully accepted as official by the Grand Council of Pennsylvania, it nonetheless was being conferred upon Cryptic Masons in Pennsylvania councils by 1859 or earlier.
- ^{xv} See Appendix - D for the original design.
- ^{xvi} But at the proceedings of the 47th Annual Assembly of the Grand Council of R & S Masters of Pennsylvania on Feb 10, 1892 the MPGM H. A. McKillip "suggested" in his annual address that the order of degrees should be: first the Royal Master, second the Select Master, and third or lastly The Super Excellent Master Degree, and this is the Pennsylvania order of conferral today. (See Appendix - A).
- ^{xvii} See Appendix - A for more information on the status of the Degree of Super Excellent Master Mason in Pennsylvania.
- ^{xviii} As suggested by Dr. Albert Gallatin Mackey in his book "[Cryptic Masonry: A Manual of the Council](#)" published in 1897.
- ^{xix} The Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of North Carolina holds proprietary rights to the Order of the Silver Trowel, having received authority to use it from the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland in 1931.
- ^{xx} This is similar to the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Mason of the USA (now called "International") which was founded on October 24, 1797 by Thomas Smith Webb and other Capitular Masons.
- ^{xxi} Also Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, along with Virginia and W. Virginia in the USA.
- ^{xxii} In 1824 the State of Maryland was the first to make the degree of Select Master Mason part of the Royal Arch Chapter system, with Philip P. Eckles dissenting. However, by this time the Grand Council system had already taken hold as the regular method of conferring the Cryptic degrees in the United States, even though some jurisdictions continued to attach them to the Royal Arch Chapter system.
- ^{xxiii} From "Transactions of the Convention of Royal & Select Masters" of 1880, and "Proceedings of the General Grand Council" of 1883.
- ^{xxiv} However, some jurisdictions like Virginia and Maryland did choose to attach the Royal and Select Master Degrees to the Capitular system and the Royal Arch Chapters within their states, as Virginia (and thereby) West Virginia still do today.
- ^{xxv} Similar to the attempt by the Pennsylvania Grand Council officers in 1854 to relinquish control over these degrees to the Grand Council of Princes of Jerusalem of the AASR, which triggered the reconstitution of the Pennsylvania Grand Council of R & S Masters.
- ^{xxvi} In the Pennsylvania ritual Installation of the Thrice Illustrious Master a rubric that asks the following question: "(Do you solemnly promise)... that you will not permit any visitor into your Council who has not received the Cryptic Degrees in a Council lawfully constituted, without his first being healed?" It would appear that the M. P. Grand Master of R & S Master Masons of Pennsylvania has the right to "heal" or regularize such a Mason at will, even if that right would be rarely, if ever, exercised.
- ^{xxvii} Because of the age & complex nature of the written materials used for this History of the Cryptic Rite, all primary sources & materials were strictly compared to prevent, wherever possible, discrepancies, inconsistencies, or conflicts between these sources. While some inconsistencies were found, information that appeared in more than one source was judged to be the more reliable. Actual Grand Council Proceedings from the 1800's were more heavily weighted due to their contemporaneousness with the events described.

Chart #3 - A Chronological History of the Grand Council of R & S Masters of Pennsylvania

A Council of Perfection is formed in 1767 in Albany, N.Y. under authority of Henry A. Francken, D.I.G. having the side degrees of Royal Master and Select Master.

|
A charter is granted to form Columbian Council of Royal Masters #1 (Thomas Lownds) in New York in 1810.

A Council of Select Masters is founded by Philip P. Eckles and Hezekiah Niles in New York in 1821.

|
Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of New York is formed on January 25, 1823.

|
Grand Council of NY grants a charter to form Hiram Council Cleveland, Ohio in January of 1827.

|
Grand Council of Royal & Select Masons of Ohio is organized January 6, 1830 by five Ohio Councils.

|
Grand Council of Ohio grants a dispensation to form a Council of R & SMs in Pittsburgh, PA in 1834.

|
Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania is organized on October 26, 1847. On December 6, 1847 the officers of the Pennsylvania Grand Council are elected and installed with three councils present: Washington #1, Mt. Moriah #2, and Lone Star #3 (Texas).

|
On February 3, 1854 the Grand Officers of the Grand Council of R & S Masters of Pennsylvania surrender their authority for the Royal & Select Master degrees to the Grand Council of Princes of Jerusalem (AASR) without consulting with their own subordinate councils. The Princes of Jerusalem accept this and immediately issue a charter for Van Rensselaer Council #1. The Pennsylvania councils call a meeting to dispute the actions of their Grand Council officers.

|
On December 30, 1854 the Pennsylvania councils meet and elect twelve new Grand Officers, including Alfred Creigh of Washington Council #1 as Most Puissant Grand Master. A new Constitution and Bylaws are also adopted and published; the new Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of the State of Pennsylvania begins issuing regular charters. This has the effect of reconstituting the Grand Council of R & S Masters of PA before end of 1854.

|
The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania meets in Grand Assembly in 1856, and continues to meet annually right up to the present day.

|
In 1858 all eleven existing subordinate Pennsylvania councils are reorganized by the Grand Council of Pennsylvania, and new charters are issued bearing new council numbers as determined by the dates of origin of the councils.

|
The Annual Grand Assembly of "Royal, Super Excellent, and Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania" opens in Altoona, PA on June 15, 1865 having added the Super Excellent Master Degree to the Grand Council title and Constitution, officially authorizing three degrees, the RM :: SE :: and SM ::

|
The "Mississippi Plan" of 1870 allowing RAM Chapters to confer Cryptic degrees is not accepted, and the Grand Council of Pennsylvania refuses to recognize Cryptic Mason degrees conferred in Chapters.

|
The General Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons of USA gives up all claims to R & S Degrees in 1853. The AASR also renounces all claims to the R & S Degrees in Baltimore, Maryland in 1870.

|
The words "Super Excellent Master" are dropped from the title of the Grand Council of PA, and the degree is moved to the third position in the order of conferral after the Grand Assembly of 1892.

Chart #4 -- The Origin of Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania

The Scottish Rite Connection

I.G. (Inspector General) Etienne (Steven) Morin

Brings Scottish Rite of Perfection to the French West Indies in 1761 with Letters Patent from Paris, France.

|

D.I.G. Henry Andrew Francken

Appointed by Morin in Jamaica, then moved to New York in 1767 and established a Lodge of Perfection there that year. With Steve Morin, Francken published what are now called the Francken Manuscripts in 1771.

|

D.I.G. Moses Michael Hays

Appointed D.I.G. for West Indies and North America by Francken in 1768 - moved to Charlestown, S.C. in 1778.

|

D.I.G. Isaac DaCosta

Appointed by Hays along with Joseph M. Myers (1788) and Berend M. Spitzer (1781). DaCosta founded Scottish Rite bodies in Charlestown, S.C. that in 1801 would become the Supreme Council 33° AASR - Mother Council of the World.

D.I.G Joseph M. Myers

Appointed by Hays to replace DaCosta upon his death 1788, Myers would deposit copies of the Royal and Select Master Degrees (AASR) in Charlestown, S.C. in 1788, proving that these two "side degrees" were available there at that time.

Thomas Lownds

Received Royal Master Degree from Abraham Jacobs in 1806. Helped form Columbia (Grand) Council #1 Royal Masters in New York in 1810. Rewrote the Royal Master degree, and most believe he originated the Super Excellent Master Degree (not the British degree of the same name) in 1817. Presided over the first conferral of the Super Excellent Master Degree in his own Columbia (Grand) Council #1 Royal Masters on December 22, 1817, tying both Royal and Super Excellent Master degrees together for the first time anywhere. Lownds established strong ties between Royal Arch Chapters in New York and his Columbia Council starting in 1818.



The Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of New York is formed January 25, 1823 (still in existence.)

This Grand Council issues a charter for (King) Hiram Council R & S Masters in Cleveland, Ohio in 1827.

The Grand Council of R & S Masons of Ohio is formed with five Ohio councils on January 6, 1830 (still in existence.)

In 1834 the Grand Council of Ohio issues a dispensation for a council of R & S Masters to meet in Pittsburgh, PA.

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The Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania is organized October 26, 1847 and then is reconstituted on December 30, 1854 with new Grand Officers, Constitution, and Bylaws.

The Grand Council of Royal, Super Excellent, and Select Masters of Pennsylvania adds the Super Excellent Master Degree to the approved Pennsylvania Cryptic degrees on June 15, 1865 in Grand Council assembled.

The Grand Council of Royal & Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania continues to meet annually from 1856 to present day.

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The General Grand Chapter of R.A.M. relinquishes all claims to the Royal and Select Masters Degrees in 1853.

The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite also renounces all claims to the Royal & Select Masters Degrees in 1870.



The Baltimore & Rhode Island Connection

Henry Wilmons (from Bremen, Germany)

Moved to Charlestown, S.C. in 1788, then to Baltimore Maryland, establishing Grand Council of Select Masters in 1792. Grand Master of Masons of Maryland in 1794.

|

Philip P. Eckles (also from Germany)

Received the Select Master Degree from Henry Wilmons in Baltimore, Maryland sometime before 1795.

Philip Eckles then rewrote and embellished the Select Master Degree, and ever afterwards considered himself to be the sole and rightful custodian of the Select Master Degree after the death of Wilmons in 1795.

Eckles also conferred his Select Master Degree upon Jeremy L. Cross in 1816. Received Royal Master Degree in 1819 (almost certainly the Thomas Lownds version.)

Thomas Smith Webb (1771 - 1819)

Mentor to Jeremy Cross from 1816 -1819, Grand Master of Masons of Rhode Island and Grand High Priest of Rhode Island in 1814, and Grand Commander of Knights Templar of Massachusetts & Rhode Island. In 1816, with others, Webb founded the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States in New York. His pupil, Jeremy L. Cross, Grand Lecturer of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut was given permission to disseminate only the Select Master Degree in Royal Arch Chapters within without the State beginning in 1817.

Jeremy Ladd Cross (1783 - 1861)

Received the Select Master Degree from Philip Eckles in 1816; received the Royal Master Degree in 1818. Cross would self-enlarge on his given authority by beginning to disseminate both the Royal and Select Master Degrees in Royal Arch Chapters in several jurisdictions. In 1818 he would quite illegally begin to issue the first charters for councils of Royal & Select Masters while continuing to permit the conferral of both degrees in Chapters of Royal Arch Masons. He was subsequently refused entry into all Pennsylvania Masonic bodies and his work banned there.

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The Origin of the Cryptic Degrees by Thomas Lounds (sic) - Part 13, (as primarily sourced from the history of Washington Lodge #21 of New York, and edited by Richard A. Eppler).

APPENDICES

Appendix - A: The Super Excellent Master Degree

The so-called "Mississippi Plan of 1870" was not the only problem facing the American Grand Councils of Royal & Select Master Masons in the middle of the 19th century. Another important issue was the lack of uniformity between the jurisdictions of the Cryptic Rite regarding the status of the Super Excellent Master Degree.

In 1867 Josiah H. Drummond,¹ being aware of this dilemma, reported to his Grand Council of Maine that several Cryptic jurisdictions allowed the Super Excellent Master Degree as an honorary conferral while some did not, and that at least one Cryptic jurisdiction (the Grand Council of Pennsylvania) had added the Super Excellent degree to the officially accepted Cryptic degrees in that state; he further reported that some jurisdictions believed the Super Excellent degree was not "Cryptic" at all, and as such should be dropped from the Cryptic Rite altogether. Drummond strongly suggested that in the interest of unity and uniformity a convention of Grand Council delegates from the twenty-eight Grand jurisdictions should be held to address and reconcile the areas of disagreement.

The American Grand Councils accepted Drummond's suggestion and a General Convention was held in the city of St. Louis, Missouri in 1868, but little was accomplished. A second convention was proposed for 1872 in New York. The delegates there appointed a Committee of Nomenclature which met and reported a consensus of opinion: "...that the official degrees of a Grand Council should consist only of the Royal Master and Select Master Degrees, with the Super Excellent Master Degree being strictly an honorary degree best left to the individual Grand Councils." This committee also suggested a standardized list of titles for Grand Council and subordinate council officers, taken primarily from those in use in the Grand Councils of Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Indiana, Maine, and New Jersey. These recommendations were then bound over to a Committee of Works which reported their agreement with them at the 1873 General Convention, in a non-binding resolution.

Although the Grand Council of Pennsylvania officially added the degree of Super Excellent Master to their "approved" Cryptic degrees in 1865, the words "Super Excellent" had once again been removed from the Grand Council's title sometime between 1871 and 1892, and the Super Excellent Master degree was subsequently moved into the third position of the degrees conferred.² These changes appear to have been made in response to the resolution and consensus from the 1873 General Convention, and to Most Puissant Grand Master Charles K. Frances' address to the Grand Council of Pennsylvania's Grand Assembly on February 15, 1888,³ as well as to Most Puissant Grand Master Harvey A. McKillip's strong suggestion⁴ to the Pennsylvania Grand Assembly in 1892 that the Super Excellent Master Degree should be moved from the second to the third position of conferral. The Pennsylvania Cryptic ritual was revised in its entirety in 1896 by a committee assigned to that duty by MPGM McKillip, however the exact dates and specific changes made regarding the Super Excellent Master Degree are not found within the published Grand Proceedings from 1892 - 1905, and thus only the final result is known.⁵

¹ Co-author in 1888 of "The Cryptic Rite: Its Origin and Introduction on the Continent". Bro. Drummond was the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Maine 1860-62, and General Grand Master of the General Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters from 1880-1882. - from the "History of the Cryptic Rite" published in 1931 by the General Grand Council of R & S Masters of the USA.

² See Appendix - B for clarification and further information.

³ In which MPGM Frances strongly recommended that the Super Excellent Master Mason Degree be moved from the second position to the third position and furthermore that it should henceforth "...be regarded simply an appendant or honorary degree."

⁴ McKillip would become the MPGM in 1896, but was a Grand Officer (Grand Sentinel) of the Grand Council in 1892.

⁵ Addendum: The position of the fifty-one Grand Councils (not including Pennsylvania) which are subordinate to the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons, International is this: "...the Super Excellent Master Mason Degree is not a Degree of the Crypt, but is one of the best devised, most impressive, and beautiful degrees. (It) tells about a period in history following the destruction of the first Temple, which relates events leading to the recovery of the lost Word. It might be regarded as one of the Cryptic Rite's detached degrees for it has no connection, either in history or symbolism, with those of Royal Master and Select Master."

(Source is the website of the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons, International, 2017.)

Appendix - A (Supplemental)

Grand & Subordinate Council Officers & Titles as reported by Josiah Drummond in 1867

Grand Councils	Officers & Titles in Grand Councils				Officers & Titles in Subordinate Councils
Alabama	G.P.	D.G.P.	G.T.I	G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., D.I.M., P.C.W.
Arkansas	M.P.G.M.	R.P.D.G.M.	R.P.G.I.M.	R.P.G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., D.I.M., P.C.W.
Connecticut	M.P.G.M.	D.P.G.M.	T.I.G.M.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., D.G.M., P.C.W.
Florida	M.P.G.M.				
Georgia	T.I.G.M	I.G.H.T.	I.G.H.A.B.		T.I.M., I.H.T., I.H.A.B.
Illinois	T.I.G.P.	I.S.G.P.	I.G.T.I.	I.G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., D.G.M., P.C.W.
Indiana	M.P.G.M.	D.P.G.M.	T.I.G.M.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., D.G.M., P.C.W.
Iowa	M.P.G.M.	R.I.G.M.	G.I.G.M.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., R.I.M., I.M.
Kentucky	G.P.	D.G.P.	G.T.I.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., D.I.M., P.C.W.
Louisiana	M.P.G.M.	D.G.M.	T.I.G.M.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., D.I.G.M., P.C.W.
Maine	M.P.G.M.	D.P.G.M.	R.P.G.M.	P.G.M.	T.I.M., R.I.M., I.M.
Massachusetts	M.P.G.M.	R.P.G.M.	P.G.M.W.	G.M.C.	M.I.G.M., R.I.G.M., I.G.M.
Michigan	T.I.G.M.	D.I.G.P.	D.T.I.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., D.I.G.M., P.C.W.
Mississippi	M.P.G.M.	D.P.G.M.	G.T.I.G.M.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., D.I.G.M., I.P.C.W.
Missouri	G.P.	D.G.P.	G.T.I	G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., D.T.I., P.C.W.
N . Hampshire	M.I.G.M.	R.I.G.M.	I.G.M.		
N. Jersey	M.P.G.M.	R.P.D.G.M.	R.P.G.I.M.	R.P.G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., R.I.M., I.P.C.W.
New York	M.P.G.M.	R.P.D.G.M.	R.P.G.I.M.	R.P.G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., R.I.M., I.P.C.W.
N. Carolina	M.P.G.M.	T.I.D.G.M.	R.P.G.I.M.	I.G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., I.H.T., I.H.A.B.
Ohio	T.I.G.P.	I.D.G.P.	G.T.I.	G.P.C.W.	T.I.G.M., D.I.G.M., P.C.W.
Pennsylvania	M.P.G.M.	R.P.D.G.M.	R.P.G.I.M.	R.P.G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., D.I.M., I.P.C.W.
Rhode Island	M.P.G.M.	D.P.G.M.	I.G.M.	G.P.C.W	T.I.M., M.I.M., P.C.W.
Tennessee	M.P.G.M.	D.M.P.G.M.	I.G.M.	G.P.C.W	
Texas	M.P.G.M.	R.P.D.G.M.	R.P.G.M.	R.P.G.P.C.W.	T.I.M., R.I.M., I.P.C.W.
Vermont	M.P.G.M.	P.D.G.M.	T.I.G.M.	R.I.G.M..	T.I.G.M., R.I.G.M., I.G.M.
Wisconsin	M.P.G.M.	R.P.D.G.M.	R.P.G.T.I.	R.P.G.P.C.	

Grand Councils with Degrees Conferred by State, Officers, and Titles as Reported by MPGM Alfred Creigh in 1867

Grand Council	Degrees	Officers & Titles
Alabama	R.M., S.M.	G.P. D.G.P. G.T.I.
Connecticut	R.M., S.M., S.E.M.	M.P.G.M. D.P.G.M.
Illinois	R.M., S.M.	G.P. D.G.P. G.T.I.
Indiana	R.M., S.M.	M.P.G.M. D.P.G.M. T.I.G.M.
Iowa	R.M., S.M.	M.P.G.M. I.D.G.M. R.I.G.M.
Kentucky	R.M., S.M.	G.P. D.G.P. G.T.I.
Louisiana	R.M., S.M.	M.P.G.M. T.I.G.M.
Maine	S.M., R.M., S.E.M.	M.P.G.M. D.P.G.M. R.P.G.M.
Michigan	R.M., S.M.	T.I.G.P. D.I.G.P. G.T.I.
Missouri	R.M., S.M.	G.P. D.G.P. G.T.I.
Massachusetts	S.M., R.M., S.E.M.	M.P.G.M. R.P.G.M.
New Jersey	R.M., S.M.	M.P.G.M. D.G.M. G.I.M.
New York	R.M., S.M., S.E.M.	M.P.G.M. D.G.M. G.I.M.
Ohio	R.M., S.M.	P.G.M. D.G.M. G.I.M.
Pennsylvania	R.M., S.E.M., S.M.	M.P.G.M. D.G.M. G.I.M.
Rhode Island	S.M., R.M., S.E.M.	M.P.G.M. D.G.M. T.I.G.M.
Vermont	R.M., S.M.	M.P.G.M. D.G.M. T.I.G.M.
Wisconsin	R.M., S.M.	M.P.G.M. D.G.M. T.I.G.M.

Appendix - B: Titles and Naming

There has been some question regarding the various titles of Grand bodies and officers of both the Grand and subordinate councils, and how these titles originated.

As an example, the Grand Council of New York is called the "Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of the State of New York", while that of Ohio is named the "Grand Council of Royal and Select Masons of Ohio", and there are a number of variations on this theme throughout the various jurisdictions in the United States.

The Grand Council of Pennsylvania was originally named "The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania", although after the 1854 reorganization at least one independent source¹ shows the "new" name to be "The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of the State of Pennsylvania". This complete name is also found in all of the official Proceedings of the Grand Council from the years 1855 through 1871.

However, there is an interesting variation here - the Proceedings from 1855 have at the top of the first page of the document these words:

"Proceedings of the Quarterly Sessions of 1855 of the Grand Council
of Royal, Super Excellent, and Select Masters of Pennsylvania."

This clearly shows that during the first year of the reconstituted Grand Council it was initially intended to meet quarterly, but in the June session of 1855 the Grand Constitution was amended to show only annual meetings going forward. But we can also note that the title of the Grand Council as used here added the words "Super Excellent", exactly ten years before this degree became part of the officially accepted degrees of this jurisdiction in 1865.

Returning to the 1855 Proceedings, the very next line noted begins with this:

"The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of the State of Pennsylvania held its first quarterly communication this evening in the Masonic Temple at Washington, Pennsylvania..."

This two-ways of titling on the same document continues in subsequent years until 1865,² when the words "Super Excellent" were shown in both places, and thereafter until 1871, the last year of available documentation until 1892.

By the 1892 Proceedings, the title had once again reverted to "The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania", dropping both the words "Super Excellent" and "of the State" from the official title (see Appendix - A for a fuller explanation of this change).

To further increase the confusion, in 1847 Most Puissant Grand Master Alfred Creigh remarked in his own short written history of the Grand Council of Pennsylvania, the following:

"The Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of Pennsylvania met...", adding an additional complexity, or substitution to the title (or it may simply be that he has taken a writer's prerogative of literary license by naming the Grand Council by this additional, shorter, Cryptic appellation).

¹ Source is "The History of the Cryptic Rite" by Hinman, Denslow, and Hunt, Volume-1, 1931.

² The Proceedings of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of the State of Pennsylvania were first officially published in 1860.

Another issue of note is that the titles of Grand and subordinate officers differed substantially between the Cryptic jurisdictions in the United States. From Appendices "A" & "E", we see that Past Grand Master Josiah H. Drummond reported on this very problem to his Grand Council of Maine in 1867; this resulted in a series of six general conventions convened between 1868 and 1880 with representatives of the twenty-eight Cryptic jurisdictions in attendance, to address the acceptance and use of the Super Excellent Master Degree, as well as the issue of naming and titles.

The Proceedings of the Grand Council of Royal, Super Excellent, and Select Masters of Pennsylvania from the year 1867 also contain, in Most Puissant Grand Master Creigh's annual address, his description of these same two issues, including a chart showing eighteen Grand Councils with the degrees recognized and their officers/titles then in use. MPGM Creigh reported that the remaining jurisdictions had not yet supplied him with their information for this chart by the time of his annual address, however the eighteen jurisdictions that had supplied their information do show an extensive lack of uniformity. Drummond's history "The Cryptic Rite: Its Origin & Introduction on This Continent" written in 1888, shows a somewhat more complete chart, with twenty-six Cryptic Grand Councils reporting in that same year of 1867 (see Appendix - A Supplemental).

An ad hoc Committee on Nomenclature appointed at the General Convention of 1872 suggested a standardized list of titles (based primarily on those titles then in use by the states of Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Indiana, Maine, and New Jersey) for both the Grand and subordinate councils in a non-binding resolution, which was then passed by the delegates of the 1873 convention. A non-binding resolution was also passed regarding the status of the Super Excellent Master Degree (see Appendix-A). No resolution was offered regarding the lack of uniformity in the official titles of the twenty-eight Cryptic jurisdictions.

The Nineteenth Annual Assembly of the Grand Council of Royal, Super Excellent, and Select Masters of Pennsylvania opened in Altoona, PA in 1865 with the words "Super Excellent Master" added to the name of the Grand Council (and without the words "of the State"); however by 1892, after two Pennsylvania Most Puissant Grand Masters had spoken against this arrangement, the name of the Grand Council of Pennsylvania was once again changed removing the words "Super Excellent Master", despite the fact that the Super Excellent Master Degree continued, and still continues to be an important part of the Cryptic degree work of the Grand Council of Pennsylvania.

Lastly, the word "Masons" was appended toward the end of the Grand Council's title, changing the official designation to that of "Royal and Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania", which remains the official title.^{3 4}

³ Extensive research has not been able to reveal when and why this final change occurred.

⁴ It is worth noting that the Grand Cryptic Constitution as amended in 1867 replaced the words "State of Pennsylvania" with the words "Commonwealth of Pennsylvania", which of course is more correct.

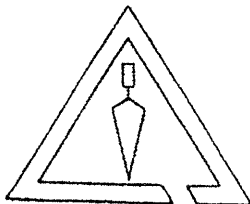
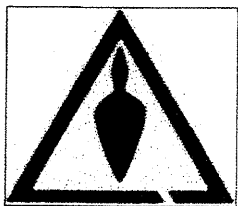
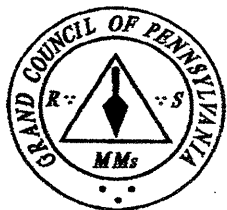
Appendix -C: Approved Emblems

The emblems shown below are taken from the current Grand Constitution of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania, and illustrate the only emblems which are considered to be "official and approved" as well as some which are invalid, and as such are not to be used by any member or any Council of Royal and Select Master Masons of Pennsylvania for any purpose whatsoever.

(The invalid emblems are shown strictly for clarification purposes.)

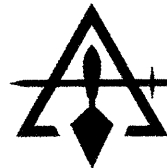
Approved Logos:

YES!



INVALID Logos:

NO!



These Images are
NOT TO BE USED
by a Pennsylvania Council of
Royal and Select Master Masons

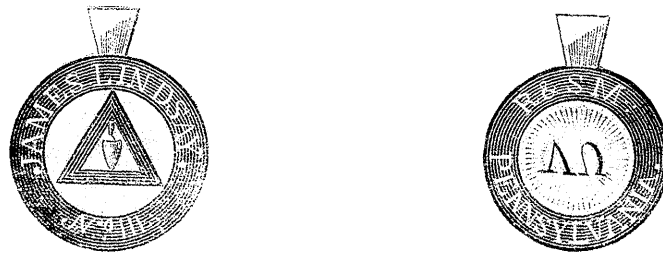


Appendix - D: Original Cryptic Member Jewel Design of 1859

The emblem depicted below was designed in 1859 at the Thirteenth Annual Assembly of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania in Altoona, PA, and was illustrated within the Proceedings of that year.

Included with the design below is a section of the report of the committee that had taken the original suggestions for the jewel and then embellished them, bringing the finished design to the Grand Council in the form of a resolution, which was accepted:

"We think the emblem should consist of a circular gold medal, about one inch in diameter. Upon one side should be a triangle, with a trowel in the center, raised somewhat from the surface of the medal; also, upon a raised rim or band of sufficient width, around the outer edge of the same side, should be engraved above the triangle the name of the member, and below the triangle, the number of his council in Roman figures. On the reverse side, there should be a similar raised rim, having engraved upon it the letters "R. and S. M.", and beneath the word "Pennsylvania". Within this rim, upon the depressed surface, there should be represented the rays of the sun, radiating from the center in which are contained the Greek letters "Alpha, " "Omega." The medal to be fastened by a ribbon of purple color, passing through a keystone."¹



The keystone was then and still remains a symbol of Pennsylvania, "The Keystone State", but in the above context also possibly denoted the heartfelt opinion of the committee that the Cryptic Rite occupied a position of eminence within the constellation that is the York Rite of Pennsylvania, controlling both the Alpha (Royal) and Omega (Select) degrees. These committee members would surely have been familiar with the words of Dr. Albert G. Mackey who insisted that "... no Mason's education is complete until he has passed the Circle of Perfection of Ancient Craft Masonry..." which he concluded consisted of the degrees of the Blue Lodge, the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, and the Council of Cryptic Masons, each of which being considered an indispensable one-third part of this Circle of Perfection.



This term, "The Circle of Perfection", found its way into the closing portion of the Select Master Mason Degree as conferred in Pennsylvania, and is found nowhere else in all of Pennsylvania Freemasonry.

¹ From the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Assembly of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Pennsylvania, which was held in the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania in 1859.

Appendix - E: Origination of the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons, International

1867

Grand Master Josiah H. Drummond reports to the Grand Cryptic Council of R & S Masters of Maine that there is little uniformity regarding the use of the Super Excellent Master degree or with the recognized Cryptic officer titles within the twenty-eight Cryptic jurisdictions in the United States of America. Drummond then suggests a General Convention of Cryptic delegates from these jurisdictions, in the interest of uniformity and unity, to investigate and reconcile these differences. The twenty-eight Cryptic jurisdictions accept this suggestion and convene a General Convention in St. Louis, Missouri in 1868, but little is accomplished there. A second convention is suggested for 1872.

1872

A second General Convention is convened in New York where the delegates present assign these two issues to a Committee of Nomenclature which meets and returns with a consensus of opinion - that the Cryptic Rite should consist only of the Royal and Select Master degrees, and furthermore, that the acceptance and use of the Super Excellent Master degree should be left up to the individual Cryptic jurisdictions. A list of titles for the Grand and subordinate councils is also suggested. Both recommendations are bound over to the next General Convention to be held in 1873.

1873

The third General Convention is convened in New York and these recommendations are sent to an ad hoc Committee of Works, which returns the following: first, that they are in agreement with both recommendations, and secondly, that the General Convention should adopt resolutions to formally accept them. These recommendations are both adopted by the convention as non-binding resolutions for the delegates to take back to their respective Cryptic jurisdictions. Two further conventions are held - one in New Orleans in 1874, and one in Buffalo, New York in 1877 to discuss the possible need for a General Grand Council of the United States of America.

August 25, 1880, Detroit, Michigan

As a collaborative means of protecting the interests of Cryptic Masonry and also combating the so-called Mississippi Plan, at this sixth General Convention an oversight body called the "General Grand Council of R & S Masters of the USA" comes into being with seventeen of the twenty-eight American Cryptic jurisdictions concurring. Most Illustrious Companion Josiah H. Drummond is installed as the first General Grand Master of the first triennial assembly of the General Grand Council, where he serves until 1883. The Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Pennsylvania, and other Grand Councils, do not accept membership but remain "recognized" by the General Grand Council.

*

At the 1880 inception of the General Grand Council, and at the instigation of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of the State of New York, a resolution is drafted and sent to the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the United States to protest their constituent Chapters continuing usurpation of the Royal and Select Master Degrees, which has resulted in a weakening of the Grand Cryptic Masonic bodies then extant in the United States. This resolution also serves as a notice to the General Grand Chapter of the intention of the newly formed General Grand Council to protect and preserve the Cryptic degrees for authorized use only by the Cryptic councils of the United States. (The General Grand Chapter had previously relinquished all claims to the "Cryptic" degrees in 1853, however this proscription had never actually been enforced against the Capitular Chapters by their own overseeing body until after the resolution of 1880.) Despite the resolution, several Masonic jurisdictions continued to confer the Royal and Select Master degrees in Royal Arch Chapters; as of 2017 the states of Virginia and West Virginia still confer the Cryptic degrees without Cryptic councils.

**Appendix - F : An Extract from Digest of the Communication of the
Fifth Annual Grand Assembly of the Royal & Select Masons of Ohio of 1834:¹**

(being the first known Dispensation granted to a Pennsylvania Cryptic Council)

Held at Columbus, Ohio, Thursday January 9, 1834; building not named. Companion William James Reese, G.P.C.W., acting Grand Puissant. Present: G. P. C., G. Treasurer, G. Recorder, G. Steward; and three pro tem Grand Officers. Four Chartered Councils represented (:)

(Regarding) Pittsburgh Council No. ____ U. D., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Grand Council adopted the following Resolution:

RESOLVED, By this Grand Council, that the Grand Puissant, and Companion Judkins, of Steubenville, be and they are hereby authorized to grant a Dispensation to the Royal and Select Masters of the City of Pittsburgh, in the State of Pennsylvania, to open a Council of Royal and Select Masters, under the jurisdiction of this Grand Council until the next annual Communication.

We find nothing further of record concerning this Council.

Special Committee again appointed to draft a suitable form of Warrant and Charter.

¹ Extracted verbatim from a transcript of the Digest of the Grand Communication of the Fifty Annual Grand Assembly of the Royal & Select Masters of Ohio, dated January 9, 1834; by courtesy of Most Illustrious Companion Bobbie G. Campbell, Grand Recorder of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masons of Ohio.

