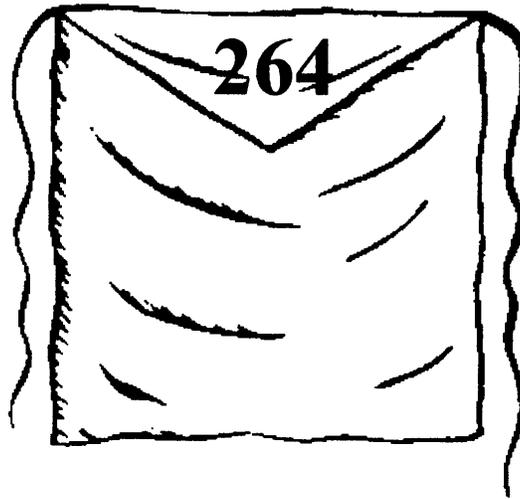


## **...A Lambskin Or White Leather Apron...**



by

A.J. Hughes, PM  
Herndon Lodge #264  
1996

**Presented to A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research, #1949**

**On**

**May 31, 1997**

*The opinions presented in this paper are strictly those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Master and Wardens of the A. Douglas Smith Jr., Lodge of Research #1949 or the official views of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Virginia.*



## ...A Lambskin Or White Leather Apron...

by  
A.J. Hughes, PM

### INTRODUCTION

This program was written in September of 1996 for presentation at Herndon Lodge #264, Herndon Virginia, on "White Leather Apron Night." All of the Brethren, including the Lodge Officers were asked to wear the Aprons with which they were raised. The program is presented as a short drama depicting one possible explanation of the reasons we wear our Aprons the way we do. The concentration of the work is on the Operative history of Masonic Craft and the Speculative beginnings of how the Apron is worn today. Information was gathered from several sources including other works on the subject. Please use and enjoy this work as you will.

To present the program requires a minimum of four Brothers.

- 1 Master who is also the speaker.
- 1 Fellowcraft.
- 1 Apprentice
- 1 Narrator

Also needed, are the rough and smooth Ashlars, and a pillar for the apprentice to move.

This program is available on disk to anyone who requests it and is also available on "Hiram's Oasis" BBS.

Write / Call / E-Mail for copies on disk or electronic transfer:

A.J. Hughes  
16304 Bromall Court  
Chantilly, VA 20151-3358  
703-830-0211 or 703-830-0539  
E-Mail: [Herndon264@aol.com](mailto:Herndon264@aol.com)

What exactly is the significance of the Lambskin or White Leather Apron to the Masonic Craft? Of equal importance, what does your apron mean to you? The Apron itself is rather plain, unassuming, maybe even dull. Why then does it excite such emotion to those of us who wear it?

If I may take a moment to wax philosophic I will regress, momentarily, to my childhood. I still remember when my father would, on occasion, sort through socks and such in one of his dresser drawers and stumble across his Masonic Apron. Near the Apron was a Masonic Bible and a small book with a snap closure. The Apron and Bible always came out together, the book with the snap was always neatly tucked away and the drawer closed. The Apron was a bit yellowed from the years and had a permanent crease across its center. The strings were frayed at the ends; in fact they were frayed to the ends. He would hold the Apron up and carefully unfold it, just to look at it. In his eyes I saw smiles and memories, and I could tell that the old White Leather Apron was one of his most prized possessions. He would let me touch it and feel the smooth, leathery surface. I had learned by then that in those days all things were secret, so I asked few questions. Those questions I did venture were usually answered with, "...one day, you may know." So, I became content to bask in his smiling eyes whenever the Apron came out, and hoped he was right, that one day I would know. I never saw Dad put the apron on, the closest I ever saw him to wearing it was when it was tied across his oak casket when he was called to the Celestial Lodge in 1984.

Today, although I am not sure I as yet understand, I do know that it is unfortunate that I never saw my father wear his prized White Leather Apron. It is with this in mind that I hope each of you considers just what your Masonic Apron means to you, and wear it with great pleasure to yourself and great honor to the fraternity.

There are many who disagree with this outlook. Those that feel that the apron is too sacred an emblem to be worn, that it should be without spot or blemish when they seek entrance to the Celestial Lodge. Brethren remember, the Apron is presented without spot or blemish, but as you move through life it was intended to protect you from those things untempered. By the time you reach the end of your days here your Apron should be filthy, and your soul spotless.

### Who Wears The Apron?

There are actually many groups or orders that have historically worn aprons to distinguish themselves. Today's use of the Apron in the speculative Masonic Lodges is but the tip of the iceberg.

- ◆ White Leather Aprons were worn by initiatory members of the Mithras.
- ◆ White Leather Aprons were worn by initiatory members of the Essenes.
- ◆ White Leather Aprons were worn by initiatory members of secret Chinese societies with histories dating back 10,000 years.
- ◆ White Leather Aprons were worn by Jewish and Druidic High Priests.
- ◆ White Leather Aprons were worn by Christians in the early years at their baptism.

- ◆ White Leather Aprons adorned statues of Greek and Egyptian gods.
- ◆ The Persians used the Apron as a national emblem.
- ◆ The Mayans, Incas, Aztecs, Hopi, Vikings, Zulus, and the Anglican clergy all wore Aprons as emblems of high office.

### Where Did It All Begin In Masonry?

When did Masons begin wearing Aprons? Why are these Aprons worn in different ways, from one Degree to another? Well, since we trace our speculative heritage to the operative Masons who built King Solomon's Temple, let's begin there. These Masons were really Masons. They worked with stone and mortar. They moved, lifted, and erected every inch of the Temple. These Masons worked hard, and this hard work called for an operative Mason's Apron, to protect them and their clothes from the stones they persuaded to form the beauty of the several apartments of the Temple. Here is perhaps one explanation of the apron and how it is worn.

- \* The lights dim, the Master tucks up the right corner of his Apron.
- \* The Apprentice is working on a rough ashlar with the 24" Gauge and Common Gavel.
- \* The Fellowcraft is working on a smooth ashlar with the Plumb, Square, and Level.

**NARRATOR** - Our story opens near the unfinished Temple, in the Quarries from which the stones were cut and numbered.

**MASTER** - You there, come to me for a moment, I have something for you. This is the Apron of your Craft; many of the Masters here have recommended you to the service of Masonry and the construction of the Temple. This Apron is new and clean, yet ancient and honorable. In fact more

ancient and more honorable than you might imagine. You are now a Brother of the Craft, wear your Apron with Honor and Pleasure. Keep the flap of the apron tied high to save your tunic.

*The Entered Apprentice moves to the South of the Lodge. He begins to work on a large stone pillar.*

**NARRATOR** - Many years pass and the Entered Apprentice learns his Craft well.

**MASTER** - My Brother Apprentice.

**APPRENTICE** - Yes my Master, what are your orders.

**MASTER** - Bring your stone to the Fellowcraft that he may finish its form for the pillars of the Temple.

**APPRENTICE** - Master, where is the Fellowcraft?

**MASTER** - The Fellowcraft is to the north. You will know him by the position he occupies and the Badge he wears.

**APPRENTICE** - The Badge he wears, Master?

**MASTER** - Yes, my Brother, the Badge he wears, you will know.

*The Apprentice picks up the pillar or rough stone and carries it across the Lodge to the Fellowcraft who is seated in the North.*

**NARRATOR** - Observe the Apprentice at work, his large Apron protects his tunic and chest from the stones he moves in the quarry.

**APPRENTICE** - My Brother, are you a Fellowcraft?

**FELLOWCRAFT** - I am, try me.

**APPRENTICE** - (A bit confused) I don't know what you mean, but anyway, my Master has ordered me to bring this to you that you may finish its form for the Pillars of the Temple.

**FELLOWCRAFT** - Thank you, place it here, I will begin work on it immediately.

*The Apprentice returns to the South of the Lodge and reports the Master.*

**APPRENTICE** - Master, the duty is performed, I have taken the stone to the Fellowcraft and he began work on it immediately.

**MASTER** - Was there any problem in finding the Fellowcraft?

**APPRENTICE**- No Master, I found him seated, with his Apron down, seeing this difference in the Badge he wore I inquired of him if he was a Fellowcraft. He said he was and I passed on your orders.

**NARRATOR** - Many years pass and the same orders are given and obeyed, and the apprentice serves well. He learns his humble Craft and teaches others his skills in the quarry.

**MASTER**- You there, my Brother Apprentice, leave your stone and go to the Fellowcraft for work and instruction. You have served well and passed along your Craft. It is time that you receive further light to the questions you may have.

*The Apprentice stands and moves across the lodge to Fellowcraft seated in the North.*

**APPRENTICE** - Brother Fellowcraft, my Master has ordered me to come to you for work and instruction.

**FELLOWCRAFT** (*The Fellowcraft stands*) - Sit down my Brother and I will begin to teach the secrets of my Craft. Turn down the

flap of your Apron; your skill will now rest within your hands, not your back and shoulders. You will no longer need the flap to protect your tunic, but it will be helpful in protecting you from the chips of stone during your work. Your Apron will be your Badge and worn thus will distinguish you from Entered Apprentices as you practice your skills as a Fellowcraft.

**NARRATOR** - Again the years come and go and time passes by.

**MASTER** - You there, my Brother Fellowcraft, join me in the East. You have served well and passed along your Craft to the young Apprentice. It is time that you receive more light to the questions you may have. Tuck up the right corner of your Apron, your skill will now rest in your mind and imagination, not in your hands. However, you should always wear your Apron proudly as it will now distinguish you from the rest of the Craft.

*The Fellowcraft is seated in the East as a Master Mason*

As you can see, the Apron was worn in its several configurations as a tool to the operative Masonic Craft. It protected the workmen from the objects of their labor. The Apron also signified office and position, much as it does today, among the three Lodges. There is also much more contained within the Apron. If you look at your Apron you can find many of the Working Tools of our forefathers.

- ◆ It contains 4 90° corners equaling 360°. Each corner is therefore, the fourth part of a circle.
- ◆ The Apron contains a triangular flap with three distinct corners, perhaps alluding to the three original Grand

Masters of Masonry, the Degrees of Masonry, the East, West, and South, or any number of other allusions. Observed generally it has the shape of a trowel. The flap's lower border forms the span of the compasses.

- ◆ The Apron contains the geometry and tools to produce shapes, prove horizontals & plumb verticals. In its edges is a measuring gauge.
- ◆ Brother Pythagoras saw the usefulness of the Apron when he declared "Eureka, I have found it"; here is the theorem and the proof.

Brethren, wear your White Leather Apron proudly, it is truly a Badge which distinguishes you from the rest of the world. Amidst its concerns and employments walk uprightly, with pleasure and honor as an example to your trust. Your Apron contains the tools you need in Masonry and in Life, wear it well my Brethren.

*The white leather apron is more ancient by far  
 Than the eagles of Rome, a symbol of war,  
 Or the fleece of pure gold by emperors given,  
 A rich decoration for which many have striven.  
 The Garter of England, an Order most rare,  
 Although highly prized, cannot with it compare;  
 It is an emblem of innocence symbolized in white,  
 And purity ever brings the greatest delight;  
 With pure thoughts and actions how happy the life  
 How care-free the conscience, unclouded by strife.*

*No Potentate ever can upon us bestow  
 An honor so great as this apron doth show;  
 No king on his throne in his highest estate  
 Can give us an emblem so cherished or great;  
 'Tis the Badge of a Mason more noble to wear  
 Than the gold of a mine or the diamond most rare.  
 So here's to the lambskin the apron of white,  
 That lips up all equals and all doth unite,  
 In the Order so ancient that man cannot say  
 When its teachings began or name its birthday.*

*Since its birth, nations young have gone to their tomb  
 And cities once great turned to ashes and gloom;  
 Earth's greatest achievements have long passed away  
 And peoples have risen and gone to decay.  
 Outliving all these never changing with time  
 Are the principles taught in our order sublime.  
 And now my good brother this apron's for you,  
 May you worthily wear it and ever be true  
 To the vows you have made to the lessons most grand  
 For these, home and country, we ever will stand.*

D.L. Clements

**Research Sources**

The Lambskin Apron. Auri Spigelman

The Apron — Distinguishing Badge Of A Mason. Matthew Hoath

D.L. Clements

Downloaded from "Hiram's Oasis" Masonic BBS.

Preston Burner Sysop 703-938-4990.

I thank these Brethren for their great work.