

The early history of the Order of the Eastern Star, like that of Masonry, is shrouded in mystery. The Order, in its present form, is the immediate outgrowth of the ritual published by Robert Morris in 1855, under the name of "The Mosaic Book". The word "Mosaic" means a piece of inlaid work, made by fitting together bits of colored material to form an artistic design or picture. Robert Morris evidently had in mind that he was putting together many beautiful things already in existence to form a new and beautiful picture. He took the idea from different publications and gave the Order a permanent form, and established certain fundamental principles for the government of the Order that enabled it to grow in strength and beauty.

Robert Morris was born in Boston, Massachusetts, August 21, 1818. He was a direct descendant of Robert Morris, the signer of the Declaration of Independence. He chose law as a profession, but found much time for travel, study and the writing of poetry. He was an ardent student of the Bible and often gave lectures on the Holy Land.

When he was twenty-one years old he moved to Oxford, Mississippi, and it was there he married Charlotte Mendenhall. Seven children were born to them, four of whom died in infancy. In 1850 he and his family moved to La Grange, Kentucky, where he resided until his death. He was Professor of Ancient and Modern History in the Masonic College at La Grange, from which place he received the degree of Doctor of Laws.

Robert Morris was made a Mason in 1846, and was Grand Master of Kentucky in 1850. He devoted the greater part of his life from then on to Masonic research and to the dissemination of Masonic knowledge. He is said to have delivered over 2000 Masonic lectures. Among the four hundred poems, which he is credited as having written, is the immortal poem, "We Meet Upon the Level and Part Upon the Square".

But, the most enduring monument that perpetuates the memory of Robert Morris is the Order of the Eastern Star. It was while he was convalescing from an illness that he formulated the plans for the work. He says in his history of the Star that he just settled on the name "Eastern Star", then the number of points to represent the Master's carpet, then the Pentagon to represent the signet of King Solomon.

From the Holy Scriptures he obtained the four biographical sketches for four of the Star points and from early Christian history he got the fifth -- the Gentile, the friend of St. John -- the elect lady whose venerable years were crowned with the utmost splendor before her crucifixion.

First -- he had Jephtha's daughter, whom he says he called Adah, for want of a better name, illustrating respect to the binding of a vow;

Second -- Ruth, illustrating constancy and devotion to religious principles;

Third -- Esther, illustrating fidelity to kindred and friends;

Fourth -- Martha, illustrating undeviating faith in the hour of trial;

Fifth -- Electa (also a fictitious name), illustrating patience and submission under wrong.

All of these are lessons of Masonic virtues.

After finishing the work, Robert Morris called a friend to his home, together with his own family, and in his own parlor conferred upon them the five degrees of the Order.

The first Eastern Star Chapter he organized was Purity No. 1, in

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Fulton, Kentucky. He invited the Masons, and their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, who were eligible and organized in a most impressive manner the Order that today numbers well over two millions members.

The Order met with instant success, but as success came, jealousy also came and Morris was subjected to criticism and ridiculed under the cry of "Innovation" and "Petticoat Masonry". With the help of the Rev. Willis Engle, Sister Nettie Ransford and a Mr. McCoy, and others, the ritual has been re-written, but never has any change been made in the lessons, purposes, signs and passes.

Robert Morris gave the Order its Twelve Landmarks. (I shall enumerate them quickly, that our memories may be refreshed.)

1. Our belief in the existence of a Supreme Being.
2. The five degrees of our Order built upon the emblem of the Master's carpet -- upon the figure having five sides and five angles, the pentagon and signet of King Solomon.
3. The stability of our Order, proclaiming it to be unchangeable.
4. The Triangle in a balanced whole, teaching its lessons of moral and beneficent purposes.
5. The sacred trust, the obligation of remaining true to the Order until death.
6. Our obligation, voluntarily assumed, from which there is no release.
7. The sacred trust of balloting, binding us to secrecy, justice and good faith.
8. Designates and implies upon whom the authority to confer the degrees shall fall.
9. A legal outlet for any ill - offense, which, through carelessness, misunderstanding, petty ^{dispute} ~~dispute~~, might come to the Order.
10. Gives to the members an appeal to insure Justice.
11. Places in the hands of the members the power to decide upon membership of eligible candidates.
12. Gives all the rights of visitation in any chartered chapter.

No doubt Robert Morris' loyalty to his country and devotion to the Flag of our Nation figured in his choice of colors for the emblematic star. To him and to us the red, white and blue have a particular significance, as it represents the triangle in our central star. It is not only a triangle of color, but also symbolizes the triangle of battle.

Electa -- red -- portrays the Battle of the Cross;

Esther -- white -- pictures the fight to save her people from extermination;

Adah -- blue -- tells the story of her fight to save her father's honor.

The colors of our Flag and our Star are synonymous.

Red symbolizes sacrifice, fervency, strength and bravery; White symbolizes light, purity, charity and peace; Blue symbolizes love, loyalty, fidelity and truth.

Finally, as Robert Morris, himself, said, "The Order of the Eastern Star was organized for a definite purpose. The purpose was to go hand in hand with the Masonic Fraternity in giving to the world Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, and these are our supreme lessons".

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