

# Rare Masonic Books



There are hundreds of thousands of Masonic books, however, rare Masonic books are very difficult to find. Which book was the first Masonic book published in America?

## **First Masonic Book in America:**

The first edition of the first Masonic book published in America was printed by Brother Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia in 1734. It was a reprint of Brother James Anderson's work, known as "Anderson's Constitutions," printed by William Hunter in London, which was published in 1723 under the authority of the Grand Lodge of England. It is entitled: "**The Constitutions of the Freemasons**". It contains the History, Charges and Regulations of the Most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity. It was compiled by Brother James Anderson, D.D.

It is a very important book which contributed to the development of not only colonial society, but the formation of the Republic. It contains a 40-page history of Masonry, beginning with Adam to the reign of King George I. It is an historical account of the science of Geometry and the Royal Art of Architecture and includes, among others, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Hiram Abif, Nebuchadnezzar, Augustus Caesar, Vitruvius, King Athelstan the Saxon, Inigo Jones, and James I of England. This work also includes 5 songs.

The reprint published by Brother Benjamin Franklin in 1734 is now very rare. One known copy of "The Constitutions of the Freemasons" is in the Library of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

## Knights Templar Masonic Books

**The Trial of the Templars:** A two volume set of the book, "Processus Contra Templario" (The Trial of the Templars) was recently donated to the Library of the Supreme Council, 33 Degree, Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction in Washington, D.C.

This contains the historically true account of the execution of the Templars and the political circumstances surrounding it. It was published in 2007 by the Vatican Secret Archives and is limited to just 799 copies. It is a facsimile and includes transcription into Italian and English of the confessions made to a commission appointed by Pope Clement V by 72 templar knights under interrogation from June 28 to July 2, 1308. Only 2 copies of the 799 known are currently within Masonic libraries. The 2 volumes are bound in leather, with gold leaf lettering within a leather case which is about 18" x 13" x 5".

The Chinon Parchment is also within these 2 volumes. Only rediscovered in 2001, after having been misfiled in the Vatican Secret Archives, this document is the papal absolution of the Templars from charges of heresy. One of the books is the Italian and English translations of the documents and the other contains facsimiles of the original parchment documents. Within the Chinon Parchment are the impressions of the 3 wax seals of cardinals Pietro Colonna, Pierre de La Chapel and Berenger Fredol.

## Other Rare Masonic Books

- **Ahiman Rezon:** Or a Help to a Brother, by Laurence Dermott. The first edition was printed in London by James Bedford in 1756, and an abridged and digested version by William Smith, published by the Grand Lodge of Philadelphia in 1783.
- Early editions of Jeremy Cross's **The True Masonic Chart or Hieroglyphic Monitor** compiled by Amos Doolittle and printed in New Haven, Connecticut in 1820.
- Printed copies of **18th-century Masonic orations**, such as those delivered by Isaiah Thomas and Thaddeus Mason Harris.

There are many, many more rare Masonic books. Mass market versions of most of these books are also available if you just want to read the book, rather than collect them as an investment.

Another way to share the knowledge found in Masonic books is to donate Masonic books that you have finished reading, or no longer want to keep in your personal library, to the Tuckahoe Lodge Library. There they will be available to members and other Masons who seek to learn more about our gentle craft.