

## The 5 Minute Mason – Masonic Myths and Outright Falsehoods

### (Part III)

**MYTH:** The ‘*All Seeing Eye on top of the unfinished pyramid*’ design on the reverse of the US \$1 bill is related to Freemasonry.



**FACT:** In reality the bill was initially designed by a committee of four men, only one of whom was a Freemason, Benjamin Franklin. The eye was suggested by the artist Pierre du Simitiere. The design was modified by two other committees before being approved. The unfinished pyramid was added at the time and none of these final designers were Freemasons. Through the Renaissance period the eye within the triangle was used as a non-denominational representation of God. There is nothing sinister or occult about it in the least.

**Myth:** Freemasonry did not operate during World War II in the countries controlled by the Nazis.

**Fact:** It did, just not openly. (Even today there are countries in which Freemasons must meet in secret.) In the infamous Buchenwald concentration camp the Masonic population reached close to 100 in October 1944, According to M. Jattefaux, a French Freemason, the known Masons met daily. By occupying the minds of these men with Masonic ritual and lessons helped relieve them of their anxieties. Masonic subjects were selected and by word of mouth transmitted from one prison cell block to the next. There quiet discussions would take place. Then cell block by cell block the results of their debate returned.

**Myth:** Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry were Freemasons.

**Fact:** Neither Thomas Jefferson or Patrick Henry were members of the Craft. An exhaustive search of Masonic records in Virginia, and elsewhere, offers no evidence to make them Freemasons. Most of the claims of Jefferson’s membership are based on his close associations with so many other Masons: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Paul Jones, James Monroe, William Clark, and Voltaire. Jefferson participated in the cornerstone laying of his University at Charlottesville, which was done Masonically. He praised Freemasonry, but his own words proved he had never been a member of the Craft.

**Myth:** All of George Washington's generals during the War for American Independence were Masons.

**Fact:** Thirty-three of the generals serving under Washington were members of the Craft, a long way from "all." The late James R. Case and Ronald E. Heaton made comprehensive studies of the Revolutionary period and debunked many of the claims considered here.

**Myth:** Washington insisted that the Marquis de Lafayette be made a Mason before he would promote him to general, and the same claim has been made about the Baron von Steuben.

**Fact:** Both Lafayette and von Steuben were Freemasons before they arrived to help fight the British. This was true of Lafayette even though he wasn't 21 years of age when he arrived in America. It's likely that Washington knew they were already Masons.

**Myth:** The Boston Tea Party was organized in St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston and its member participated by tossing the tea into Boston Harbor.

**Fact:** So well has the secrecy surrounding the Boston Tea Party been kept that to this day not a single participant can be truthfully named! It's true that St. Andrew's Lodge didn't meet on the night of the "party" as scheduled. This proves nothing. The letter "T" that has been proven to be part of the next set of minutes of the Lodge is actually an indistinguishable scribble. By no stretch of the imagination can it be called a "T" or any other letter.

**Myth:** There is no such thing as a woman Freemason.

**Fact:** Feminine Freemasonry and Co-Masonry do exist; in fact there are quite a few Feminine Grand Lodges. Belgium and France have Feminine Lodges, but the largest concentration of women masons is in England with some 60,000 members. Yes, they are here in the US also. Just because mainstream Grand Lodges don't recognize them does not mean that they don't exist. In fact I had an up close and personal encounter with a female Mason about seven years ago...a meeting that I won't soon forget, I assure you. If you'd like to read my account of that meeting just search the Tuckahoe webpage for my 'nugget' from February of 2009 where I devoted several paragraphs describing the encounter. Go ahead and read it...then decide how you would have responded.

So, is there a place for women in Masonry? On one side there is this argument; that in an organization with such high and lofty goals as those of Freemasonry, perhaps we should not worry too much about the gender of our members. No, wait! Responding to this can only lead to heated rhetoric, and most likely charges of sexual discrimination. I personally know of at least two ACLU lawyers that would love to sink their teeth into that case! Notwithstanding, the fact remains that Freemasonry began as a male-only fraternity, and the vast majority of its members want it to remain that way.



... The 5 Minute Mason: #82 in a series of nuggets from the Quarry of Freemasonry.<sup>SM</sup>

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