

Chapter 11

“FREEMASONRY” AMONG THE AMERICAN INDIANS

Many Masonic authorities have been impressed with the striking similarity of certain rites, ceremonies, symbols, and signs among the American Indians to the institution of Freemasonry. Most students of the subject admit this apparent resemblance and seek to explain the mystery. Their amazement is increased, however, as they become acquainted with the ruins of ancient temples in Central and South America and Mexico.

This subject is so pertinent to the theme under consideration that it deserves attention. Before attempting to offer an explanation of this profound mystery, let us consider the testimony of Masonic historians respecting the similarities that exist, both among the present day Indians and the ancient builders of temples and pyramids.

In Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, we read:

Among the many evidences of a former state of civilization among the aborigines of this country which seem to prove their origin from the races that inhabit the eastern hemisphere, not the least remarkable is the existence of Fraternities bound by mystic ties, and claiming, like the Freemasons, to possess an esoteric

knowledge, which they carefully conceal from all but the initiated. De Witt Clinton relates, on the authority of a respectable native minister, who had received the signs, the existence of such a society among the Iroquois. The number of the members was limited to fifteen, of whom six were to be of the Seneca tribe, five of the Oneidas, two of the Cayugas, and two of the St. Regis. They claim that their institution has existed from the era of the creation. The times of their meeting they keep secret, and throw much mystery over all their proceedings.

Mr. Frank Cushing of the Smithsonian Institute was commissioned to make a careful study of the customs and traditions of the Pueblo Indians of the southwest. He became a member of their tribe and an influential chief among them. Among the interesting discoveries he made as an honorary member of their clan was the following: "The existence of twelve sacred orders, with their priests, their initiations, their sacred rites, as carefully guarded as the secrets of the ancient sacred mysteries to which they bear great resemblance."

The historian Brinton tells us in his instructive work, *The Myths of the New World*, (p. 285) that among the red race of America:

The priests formed secret societies of different grades of illumination, only to be entered by those willing to undergo trying ordeals, whose secrets were not to be revealed under the severest penalties. The Algonkins had three such grades—the Waubino, the Meda, and the Jossakeed, the last being the highest. To this no white man was ever admitted. All tribes appear to have been controlled by their secret societies.

Another authority has written of this mysterious subject: "Everyone who knows the Pueblo Indian knows that so far as his profession of Christianity goes it is his pastime, his real religion is that remarkable system of rites which his fathers have delivered to him as a trust from the foundation of the world."¹

¹ C. F. Sanders, *The Indians of the Terraced Houses*, p. 39.

In Dr. Mitchell's popular book, *The History of Freemasonry*, we learn of this subject:

It is true, that, if we believed there was reliable testimony that Masonry was in the possession of the Indians before the discovery of this continent by Columbus, it would become a subject of deep interest to inquire whether the aborigines sprang from the lost tribes of Israel; and, this fact being ascertained, then to determine whether, at any period, there was a commercial intercourse carried on between them and any other portion of the world; for if, in 1492, Masonry was known to the aborigines, the conclusion is irresistible, that they received it from an intercourse with some other nation or people, as they could not have brought that knowledge with them long before Masonry was instituted.

The religious ceremonies, but more especially their belief in one great spirit, one great first cause, one God, favors the idea that they were descended from the Jews. . . .

To our subject, it is important that we ascertain, if possible, whether Freemasonry was known to the Indians prior to the discovery of the continent by Columbus. If it can be shown that Masonry was, at that time, known to the aborigines, it would prove to our mind, satisfactorily, either that the Indians came here since the building of the Jewish Temple; or that, if they emigrated to this country at any time anterior to the days of Solomon, other emigrants came among them afterward, for no man can show any reliable evidence that Masonry existed in the world until it was instituted by King Solomon. No one, who does not jump to conclusions from mere chimeras of the brain, can for a moment suppose that Masonry was in possession of the lost tribes of Israel, and they, landing on this continent, perpetuated it down to the present day. As well might we suppose, as before suggested, that it had been left here by Noah, or that it was instituted at the Tower of Babel, after language was confounded, with a view that, by this universal language, men might be able to recognize and hold communion with each other the world over. Either of these fanciful suppositions would drive us to another, more serious in its consequences, viz., that God failed to accomplish his designs, for the Bible tells us, that the whole earth was submerged, and that only Noah and his family were saved; and that sacred volume also informs us that the language of the Babylonians was confounded, that they might not hold communion one with another. but, thereby, be compelled to separate into tribes or nations, speaking the same tongue. But granting that Masonry did exist on this

continent before its discovery by Columbus, would it not be quite as rational to suppose it was brought here immediately after the completion of Solomon's Temple?

The Bible informs us that the wise men of all nations visited Jerusalem, to behold the Temple, and learn wisdom of Solomon. Now, if there were at that time any wise men on this continent, they certainly visited and learned wisdom of Solomon. But we cease these wild speculations, and come to the naked proposition—Were the aborigines in possession of Freemasonry when this continent was discovered by Columbus? We answer, unhesitatingly, they were not; and, though we can not be expected to prove a negative, we shall proceed to show upon what shallow proofs reliance is placed by those who maintain the opposite ground. . . .

I am not able from the source of information now before me, to give a more circumstantial account than I have above, of these secret Associations. The accounts we have, speak of them only in connection with the Welch Indians, and have been furnished by writers not of the Mystic Craft, who introduced the facts in relation to them, for the single purpose of showing that the ancestry of those Indians must have emigrated from Wales. Of this there can be no reasonable doubt. This emigration must have taken place several centuries before the days of Columbus, and the knowledge of Freemasonry, which these emigrants possessed, must have been derived from the Druids, of whom there were more in Wales than in any other country in Europe. . . .

The Menominees and Iroquois may have learned their mysteries from the Welch Indians; or, on the supposition that they did not, their knowledge of the mysteries might be traced to a more ancient source—even the same from which the Druids themselves derived them. . . .

It is asserted that Freemasonry existed in Mexico long before the days of Cortes, and it will be seen that we are subject to some embarrassment in denying the truth of this assertion, when we remind our readers that the affirmative party have done nothing but to affirm.

In 1880 William McAdams wrote of his explorations in ancient mounds and Indian villages:

I have spent considerable time during the last few years exploring our ancient mounds and earthworks, and have been surprised frequently to find mounds and earthworks resembling well-known symbols of Masonry. . . Some of them are thus: Circles,

squares, triangles; triangles and squares surrounded by circles; circle between parallel lines; the Mason's square was not only an architectural measure, but a chronologic guide with the ancient Mexicans. . . Pre-Columbian dwellers of North America had a pretty good idea of our Egyptian obelisk, and engraved it on stone, in connection with an equilateral triangle, all of which is decidedly Masonic.

Masonic signs and symbols originated in the first separation that took place in the family of Adam. Masonry may be traced in all mythology to the remotest parts of the globe. In the temple of the Sun, Moon, and in the very Idols of Mexico, in the Pyramids, Tombs, Babel, Stonehenge, and in the Solemn Groves of the Druids. Masonry shall be traced wherever man is found.²

THE VOICE OF AN INDIAN IS HEARD IN THE LAND

From another authority we quote:

The question of Freemasonry among the American Indians has only been partially studied. Was there a Freemasonry among the primitive tribes? If we have in mind an organization of operative builders who evolved into a speculative fraternity of character builders with well defined regulations and usages, we will not find any Freemasonry among them; but if we conceive of Freemasonry as teaching basic spiritual truths by symbols and allegories that have come down from prehistoric times, we may well study the legends and beliefs of the Indians, and will discover similarities that may possibly point to some common origin. . .

Many distinguished Indians have since become members of the Fraternity, among whom was the late Gen. Eli S. Parker, the Seneca chief, who was aide to Gen. Grant in the Civil War.

When called upon at a Masonic banquet, General Parker thus referred to himself: "I am almost the sole remnant of what was once a noble race, which is rapidly disappearing as the dew before the morning sun. I found my race melting away and I asked myself, 'where shall I go to find a home and sympathy when our last council fire is extinguished?' I said, 'I will knock at the door of Masonry and see if the white race will recognize me as they did my ancestors when we were strong and the white man weak.'

"I knocked at the door of the Blue Lodge and found brotherhood around its altar. I went before the great light in the Chapter and found companionship beneath the Royal Arch. I entered

² J. A. Weiss, *The Obelisk and Freemasonry*, p. 164.

the Encampment and found there valiant Sir Knights willing to shield me without regard to race or nation. If my race shall disappear from the continent, I have the consoling hope that our memory shall not perish. If the deeds of my ancestors shall not live in stories, their memories will remain in the names of our lakes and rivers, our towns and cities, and will call up memories otherwise forgotten. I am happy; feeling assured that when my glass is run out I shall follow the footsteps of my departed race, Masonic sympathizers will cluster around my coffin and drop in my lonely grave the evergreen acacia, a sweet emblem of a better meeting."

Many distinguished Indians have found the same bond of true fraternity in our Lodges. A few white men have been privileged to participate in the "medicine lodge" of the Indians. Such was the privilege of Brother Alanson Skinner who received the rites of the Menominee tribe and at their request paraphrased the ancient myth which is the theme of their rite. . .

Brother Skinner tells us that among the so-called Pueblo Indians where they have lodge rooms, altars and secret rites, they teach a profound philosophy of religion and that they have secret and sacred words used only in the lodge and with such lost meaning that it can be really called a "lost word."

The Bureau of American Ethnology has much data on every phase of Indian life, religion, culture and traditions but only a few scholars who are qualified have unearthed the little we have with which to definitely compare the rites and ceremonies with the rites and customs of Freemasonry.

Furthermore, we as Masonic students are yet far from definite knowledge of the origin of much of our so-called ancient usage. We know but little of the Eleusinian rites of ancient Greece; and even less about the rites of Isis, which seem to have eventually evolved into the rites of Osiris, Isis and Horus.

One outstanding feature of all the ancient mysteries, which seems also to be an outstanding feature of the Indian myths was the deep spiritual significance—belief in the Great Spirit and in Immortality.³

Some Masons have related interesting accounts of being protected by the Indians, their lives being spared in some cases, because they gave the Masonic distress signal. W. L.

³ *The New Mexico Freemason*, Oct., 1937.

Boden has written in his book, *Masonry Among the American Indians*, that:

During the War of the Revolution, at the battle of the "Cedars," thirty miles above Montreal, on the St. Lawrence, Colonel McKinstry, then a Captain in Patterson's regiment of Continental troops, was twice wounded, and later taken prisoner by Indians in the British service. The previous bravery and success of Colonel McKinstry had excited not only the fears but the resentment of his Indian conquerors; and in accordance with their custom in warfare, he was doomed to die at the stake, with all the horrid and protracted torments which the Indians knew so well how to inflict and to endure. He had been fastened to the fatal tree, and preparations for the human sacrifice were rapidly proceeding, when, in the agony of despair, and scarcely conscious of hope, he made the mystic appeal of a Mason in the hour of danger. It was seen and understood by the Indian chieftain Brant who was a Mason, and present on the occasion. Brant at once interposed in his behalf, and succeeded by his influence, in rescuing his American brother from his impending fate. Having freed him from his bonds, he conducted and guarded him in safety to Quebec, where he placed him in the hands of the English, by whom he was permitted to return home on parole.

Another author, Edwin A. Sherman, in his book, *Fifty Years of Masonry in California*, has written of the Indians' acquaintance with Masonic signs, though they were not known to have been associated with Masons:

On one occasion Bro. Saschel Woods with a small party of men had diverged from the main line of travel to Santa Fe and proceeded to Taos. This small party, having completed their business transactions, started to return across the country in a more direct way than going back by the way of Santa Fe. On the second or third day's journey homeward they were surprised and surrounded by a large body of Indians, from which there was no escape. They were captured, disarmed, and taken up into the mountains where there was some small timber, and each one of them tied and bound to a tree, where their captors piled brush around them to be set on fire and burn them after gratifying their barbarous intentions and mutilation of their victims. While thus

bound, and just before the torturing was to commence, Bro. Woods managed to free his arms, and it flashed upon his mind in an instant to give the Masonic sign of distress, though he had not the least hope or expectation that it would be recognized, but he made it at a venture. To his surprise it was not made in vain. The Chief of this tribe of Indians immediately sprang toward him and cut his bonds loose, and all proceedings with the others at once ceased. The Chief then informed him that one of his party had killed an Indian of his tribe without any just cause or provocation. Bro. Woods informed him that there must be some mistake and that none of his party was guilty of such an act, that at the time it was alleged to have been done, he and every member of his party were in Taos, and stopping all together at the time at the same meson or hotel, and knew nothing about it whatever. The Chief then said to him: "I will keep all your men here prisoners, and I will send a small party of my tribe with you to Taos. If the owner of the hotel says that you and your men were at his place, on the same day that you say you were, and that they knew nothing about the killing of one of my tribe, then I will spare your lives; but if you have lied to me, then it shall be worse for you and them than we at first intended." So the captives were untied from the trees while Bro. Woods with the small party of Indians rode to near Taos, and two of the Indians went into the town, made inquiry, and brought out the owner of the hotel, who confirmed all that Bro. Woods had stated, and then returned with him to where the rest of the tribe with their prisoners were waiting. The Chief, on being informed by the small party of Indians on their return that Bro. Woods had told the truth, immediately gave orders to release all the prisoners; their horses, guns, ammunition, and everything taken from them were restored, and a strong escort of this tribe was sent to accompany them several days by a circuitous route, so that they might not fall in with that part of their tribe that was still out hunting to gratify their revenge. When they had struck the main road their Indian escort left them, and they continued their homeward journey in safety.

A writer in the *Trestle Board* in its issue of January, 1895, gives the following thrilling account:

After leaving Salt Lake we travelled some days without notable incident, until about the middle of the forenoon of the fourth or fifth day, when, while the entire train and all hands were quietly jogging along, as suddenly as a flash of lightning, Ute

Indians seemed to rise out of the earth, as it were, all around our whole train and company, and each Indian leveled his rifle on a member of the train.

Then, for the first time in my Masonic experience, I found my own life and those of all my company in peril. I thought quickly,—“It can do no harm, it may do good, and I will try the virtue of a certain signal.” I gave it, when instantly I heard a loud yell and saw every gun drop as if the hands that held them had been paralyzed! I began, dazed though I was, to look around for the one who, by magic as it were, had wrought such a deliverance, when my eyes rested upon one on a horse coming straight to where I stood transfixed as the Sphinx. As soon as he knew that I saw him, he motioned to me to approach him, which I was glad to do. Arrived at the side of his horse, he took me by the hand, lowered his mouth to my ear, and in a whisper said, “Are you a Mason?” and this, too, in as good, unbroken English as I could command. I replied, “I am,” and he responded “So am I.” He then spoke to his command in Ute language, and they sat down on the ground with their guns across their laps. He then told me to follow him, which I did, and went out of sight of the Indians and of my company, behind a hill, when he dismounted and proposed to examine me to ascertain if I was a Mason, of which he soon expressed himself entirely satisfied. I then asked him who he was, and how he spoke my language as fluently as any white man could speak it. He told me that his name was Walker, and that he was a half-breed Ute; that he had been educated in a New England college, graduated, and then was initiated, passed and raised in a Master Mason’s or Blue Lodge, and then returned to the place of his nativity—to his mother’s people, who had almost forced upon him their chieftainship. He then inquired my destination, and on being told that it was Los Angeles, he told me that it was useless for me to try to get there without an escort of Utes. He then detailed fifteen of his best men, gave them instructions to escort us to Los Angeles, without pay or the promise of hope thereof, and did it most faithfully.

DID THE MORMONS TEACH “MASONRY” TO THE INDIANS?

In an address by John McCoach, delivered before the Colorado Springs Scottish Rite Association and published in the *Square and Compass*, February, 1908, he related a highly interesting account of his experiences with an Indian

tribe and tried to explain how the Indians had become familiar with Freemasonry:

When and where did the North American Indians get the secrets of Free Masonry? Some of the wild tribes have them, I know, and I will tell you a little of the experience I had with a band of Nez Perces in Idaho. I, with ten others, was employed to drive a large herd of cattle from Gallatin Valley, in Montana, to Willamette Valley, in Oregon. The man in charge was Dr. Hartman, formerly of Ohio. He was a Master Mason, and so were six others, making seven out of the eleven that had received the first three degrees of Masonry.

We went down the Salmon River Valley in Idaho; the route was rough, but the hardest part of the trip was herding the cattle at night. We had four wagons to carry our supplies, etc. One day, Dr. Hartman and I were riding some distance behind the outfit. The Doctor espied something bright in the dust of the road. He dismounted and picked up a brass penholder with the pen inserted in the barrel. He dropped it in one of his pockets and remounted, rode into the camp where the boys were preparing supper. We unsaddled our ponies and I took both out to the herd. While I was gone a squaw came to camp with some moccasins and other beaded trinkets to trade, as is their custom. She bantered the Doctor as she did the others to swap. The Doctor pulled the penholder out of his pocket and showed it to her. She held up a pair of moccasins, and a bargain was struck and a trade made. She disposed of her wares on about the same basis of value. Nothing was thought of the occurrence until the next afternoon, when we stopped alongside a small stream, preparing to make camp. A roving band of Nez Perces Indians, of some two hundred, stopped on the other side of the creek, and went into camp. Before we hardly knew of their presence, a chief and the swapping squaw of the evening before came to our camp. The chief spoke some English and accosted the Doctor, holding up the brass penholder, asking if he swapped for moccasins. The Doctor nodded he had. The Chief told him to get the moccasins, which he did.

The Chief took the moccasins and hurriedly and angrily pulled the strings out and handed them to the Doctor, and the moccasins and penholder to the squaw, as much as to say the strings were of the value of the penholder. The others brought what they got from the squaw. He soon wound up the trades, and I assure you there were no protests, for the band on the other

side of the creek looked too formidable for our little squad. The Doctor in his effort to get the affair adjusted, in throwing his arms about displayed a Masonic pin on the lapel of his vest—a square and compass with the letter "G." The Chief saw it, and instantly his demeanor changed, and if it is possible for an Indian's countenance to change, his did; for then and there he gave the sign of the first degrees of Masonry, took the Doctor by the hand, and they went back to the wagon and talked. In a short time the Doctor called me, and when I went where they were, the Chief would not take the Doctor's word for it that I was a Mason, but I had to prove myself one by giving all the signs, exchanging the grips and words. We informed him that all our party were not Masons. We went up a side gulch, through a thicket, and found an open space.

I was sent for the other five, one at a time, that we knew to be Masons, for we had made ourselves known to each other. He would not take our word for it, and each was obliged to prove himself a Mason. After his examination of us, he appeared to be the best pleased Indian I ever saw, and, if I do say it, there were seven white men well pleased, for I am satisfied that he came with the pretext of the squaw's wares and settlement to pick a quarrel, kill us, and take the herd of cattle, and probably the squaw was sent the evening before to make the trades she did, for they wanted an excuse as they were playing friendly with the whites. After his examination of us, his talk of pleasure and smoke of peace, we went back to the wagons and the four profanes, who were nearly scared to death. We surrounded our stock and were preparing to send out herders with them. The Chief informed us that his braves would take care of all the stock, and his word was law; besides we had confidence in him by this time, so after eating our supper, we turned in and slept; but I fear our four profane friends and comrades slept but little that night. In the morning the stock was all right, and by the time we had our fire started the Chief and two bucks came over and gave us all the trout we could eat for breakfast. Some of our cattle had become sorefooted in traveling over the rough roads, and in the morning before starting we tied up their feet in burlap and gunnysacks; but this morning our Brother Chief gave a grunt of disgust and said "No good," rode over to his camp, and in a short time returned with half-dozen bucks and some raw-hides. He cut a circular piece, punched holes at the edge with his knife, put strings in the holes, then pulled it around the animal's feet, and by tying, formed a shoe or moccasin. After breaking camp, the chief and his band escorted us until

nearly noon. He told us he could go no farther, bade us good-bye; but before leaving he gave the Doctor a piece of wood with some hieroglyphic cut on it, and told him to give it to the first Indian who came to us and for him to give it to his chief. He and his band turned and rode away. After crossing a steep ridge an Indian came to us. The Doctor gave him the piece of wood, and by sign, etc., made him understand to take it to his chief. In a short time a chief and four bucks came to us, talked to us in broken English and Chinook for a short time and went away, and we were not molested by Indians during the remainder of our journey to the Williamette Valley, where we turned over the herd of cattle and separated.

I have never seen any of our party since. With the last Indian that visited us I saw or heard nothing Masonic. Now, where did the first Chief get his knowledge of Masonry? I know that some claim that medicine men have some kind of Masonry. Others claim that many chiefs were in the habit of visiting St. Louis and other Eastern cities with members of the Hudson Bay Fur Company; which had their traders among all the Indian tribes and that some of the Chiefs were made Masons while on such visits. My theory for the first Chief's knowledge of the degrees is that he received it from the Mormons of Idaho, that settled on the head waters of the Salmon River, near Fort Lemhi, a Mormon Fort. In 1842 Mormons at Nauvoo received a dispensation to open a Masonic Lodge from the Grand Master of Illinois. From the report to the Grand Lodge of Illinois, they got busy right away, having made 286 in less than six months. After trying to control them without effect, the Grand Lodge cancelled their dispensation and expelled the whole outfit. Shortly after they went West, settled at Salt Lake, Utah, and some of them went further North, and located in Idaho. They always held on to the dispensation, and from that authority they established a rite known as the Priesthood of Enoch, and they conferred their degrees on any one they wanted. Being isolated from the force at Salt Lake, they conferred their degrees on the chiefs of the different tribes for their own protection. I do not know if the chief was regular or not; I know not if we violated our obligations by conversing about Masonry with a clandestine Mason; but I do believe, if it had not been for the Masonic pin on the Doctor's vest and the Chief's knowledge of its import, your humble servant would not be here tonight.

From another Masonic publication we quote:

I am glad,—yes, I am very much pleased,—that you called my attention to the very able article in *THE TYLER-KEYSTONE*, "Is there Masonry Among the Indians?" I am pleased to know that there are other men that are interested in placing the American Indian on the higher plane where I feel that he justly belongs.

If Masonry is uplifting to the white man, why may it not have that same influence with the red man? It may be that if we would search the records of the past ages, we would find right here in our own United States something that has been buried in the rubbish of the Temple and that would throw much light on Ancient Masonry. . . .

Soon after General George A. Custer met his Waterloo on the plains of Dakota, I received a telegram to go to Washington, D. C. I was informed by the chief clerk in the Indian Office that the Indians at the Spotted Tail agency in Dakota were in a bad condition. There was fear expressed that they might leave the reservation and go on the warpath.

I was commissioned as Indian Agent, and I started for the agency. . . .

We had half a dozen Indian police with us as an escort. Lying around the camp fire one evening, I noticed that he wore a Masonic charm on his watch chain. He had traveled widely and had taken much interest in the Craft. He remarked that he had reason to believe that some of the Indians had knowledge of Masonry, and that while living among them in New Mexico he had seen some things that had set him thinking. He asked me to bear the thought in mind and see if our people had any knowledge of the work.

From that time on I tried to learn all I could of their secret lodges. My labor was not in vain. One day, sitting in my office, I noticed a long column of horsemen coming over the hill from the east to our camp; they all wore white blankets, and all rode white horses. The interpreters were called to explain. They said it was the Holy Lodge, or the Band of Execution, representing the highest law in the land, from whose decision there was no appeal. They rode on in single file until they came up to the agency buildings. There they dismounted in a very quiet way, and filed into the council room. Here they all sat in a circle. The peace pipe was lighted, and each one smoked and prayed to the Great Spirit, asking him to guide them in his way, as they did not want to do anything wrong and they were his children. . . .

I often talked with the leaders of the Holy Lodge, the supreme council, and inquired what the white blanket and the white

horses signified. I learned that all emblems and signs came from their fathers, and not from the white men.

They have a sign language. Many of the signs are very much like some that are used by Master Masons. Telling how they had treated an enemy in battle, how they had removed his heart, cut his throat, etc., the hand would follow the thought. When they greet their loved and respected brothers, they do it with all the fullness of their hearts; they throw their arms around their bodies, and kiss them on the cheek. Many points of fellowship are seen in these greetings.

The white horse and white blanket are emblems of purity, and badges of the Holy Lodge. The greatest likeness to Masonry is in the spiritual part of the work. The Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man are inculcated. A brother in need finds always a brother in deed. They love and respect a brother Indian from the fullness of their hearts and from lessons taught them in infancy. The tenets of Masonry have been their rule and guide for thousands of years, and become a part of their nature. Brotherly love prevails, and every moral and social tie is cemented. What do they know about the word? Have they the word? Let us see. Did you ever stop to think about the word of an Ancient Master in Masonry? At the building of the Temple there were three that had the word; when one was killed, the word was lost. According to that, only one really had the word.⁴

From the *Masonic Bulletin*, August, 1915, we quote the following:

Legends which have a Masonic coloring are numerous among the American Indians. Some of them cause the enquirer to hesitate and consider before he puts them aside as being only characteristic of mystic, social and benevolent societies among the aborigines. The signs and words startle one by their evident proximity to those known in Freemasonry.

George Copway, one of the Ojibway tribe which dwelt on the northwestern shores of Lake Superior, was a highly educated Indian. He was a member of the Masonic Brotherhood. He asserted that the elements of Free masonry had long been known among the tribes of the forest. He stated that the Proficient in the Art wore a small badge of cloth adorned with wampum and surrounded by a fringe of feathers. On its face was a device of a finger

⁴ *The Tyler-Keystone*, September 20, 1906.

pointing to a long road, emblematical of a future life of instruction. The badge was worn nearest the skin, on the breast. It was the Indian's diploma, the voucher of his character. The mystic credential of his standing.

There was a similarity in some points which characterized the principle festivals of the Iroquois, to some which obtain among us Freemasons of the present day. The Indians perambulated round their council room, which was always an oblong square, while the wigwams in which they live were circular. At each round of the procession, which followed the course of the sun it stopped at the east, where the three oldest chiefs were seated, dressed in the most ancient costume of the nation. Each time certain questions were asked of those venerables and answers returned. The procession consisted of nine males, two of whom were the bearers of the animal to be sacrificed to the Great Spirit, "Ho-wah-ne-o," whom they recognized as their Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. They never used, the full word "Ho-wah-ne-o," but simply said "Ne-o," even at their most sacred festival. The meaning of "Ho-wah" is Jehovah.

In the October (1919) issue of the *Iowa Masonic Bulletin*, we read:

In 1880, some of the White River Utes were out on the war path, and a party, one of which was myself, desired to cross the Sangre de Christo or second range of the Rocky Mountains, and as we were going nearly into the territory of these rebellious Utes, we were required to go in at least seven together and the government made us carry Winchester rifles and ammunition to defend ourselves with and then the licensed wagon drivers to haul our trunks and paraphernalia. We were required to walk three quarters of a mile ahead of the team and three the same distance behind it and one with the driver between these to avoid being surprised and be in hearing distance to assist or mobilize in event of signs of trouble and so forth. I happened on a certain day near the first of June to be with the front three, being a Mason and my companions were not such, when about ten o'clock in the forenoon, just as we turned a point on the mountain side, behold we were within 75 yards of about 75 to 100 Indians in their War Paint, walking single file down the side of the mountain, seemingly rather occupied looking closely at the ground. We three immediately cocked our guns, the noise of which attracted their attention, and they each seemed simultan-

ously to do the same thing. I saw that would not pay so said hold on to my companions—sat my gun down and hailed them with the grand hailing sign of a Master Mason, said something to them in their language and they all took their guns down and he asked in English that I meet him and pow wow. I started with my gun, when he told me to leave that, which I accordingly did. My companions did not want me to go and while parleying with them he saluted me with a part of the sign of a M. M. rather than the due guard, and I told my boys I was going to him or to meet him, and did so. We met, grasped hands as M.M.'s with the grip and then we went around behind some rocks and went through the grips and words of Blue Lodge Masonry, as well as you and I could meet and do it. Then he told me they were on the war path against those rebellious Utes who had but a few hours before gone across the path they were trailing when we came across them. They had seen us some time before we had seen them and said they were in the Government employ. I felt relieved and glad to meet a brother there in the wilds of Colorado even if he was a red Brother and belonged to a lodge to which mine was a clandestine one. He said that no one knew about how long the order had existed among them but that the Medicine men had gotten it from the Great Spirit and it was never given to anyone below a sub chief, as a common warrior would be useless if he had it in fighting the enemy if he happened upon a Mason, as he would be too lenient for Indian warfare.

Frederick S. Barde has written about this mystery:

A Scottish Rite Mason who has lived long in Oklahoma was asked if he believed the Osages knew anything of Masonry. He replied instantly that he did, and told of having recognized certain signs used by an Osage who had shown curiosity in examining a Masonic badge. This Osage could not speak English and talked through an interpreter. This Scottish Rite Mason had no familiar acquaintance with the Osages, and admitted that his belief was based largely on surmise, as he did not attempt to hold Masonic communication with the Indian.

The observation and belief of this Mason is common to many others. A Mason ignorant of Osage customs and speech, watching attentively a conference of Osages, and departing without inquiry, might be convinced beyond the shadow of doubt that these Indians know something of Masonry.

All North American Indians have an inter-tribal means of communication, known as the sign language. It is so graphic and comprehensive that two Indians, wholly unable to understand each other orally, may converse easily and with certainty in this language. In it are two signs that correspond without appreciable difference to two of the most important signs of Masonry, both in the degree of Master Mason. Remarkable as it may be, the meaning of these Indian signs is practically the same as their Masonic counterparts, one being concrete and the other more or less abstract.⁵

In the Masonic magazine, *The Builder*, May, 1916, appeared a similar article relating how certain Indians in Nevada, in 1867, responded to a Masonic signal:

About 2 o'clock in the afternoon a band of Indians, finely mounted, appeared on a ridge above the valley, and he saw they were in hostile array, and said he hardly knew what to do, but thought if the G. H. S. would ever do any good, now was the time to try it; so he gave it, and the leader of the Indians as once dismounted, stuck a spear he carried, in the ground, and left the band, came down, took Heath by the hand, led him behind the wagon, and, as he expressed it, gave him more grips and signs than he knew, and gave him to understand that his party must leave and return to Virginia City.

The Indians then remained with them a day or two and escorted them out of the hostile country, and until they were safely on their journey and in sight of Virginia City, when the Chief parted with his white Brother, taking his men with him, and were soon out of sight.

Brother Crandell, who was at the time Grand Sr. Warden of our Grand Lodge, told me that, in crossing the plains in 1849, with a large company of emigrants, he and one other man were the only Masons, although there were several families in the company. The Comanches had war parties out, and were very troublesome, and had stolen stock, and killed several people. Crandell and his friend agreed, should the Indians make their appearance near them, to try Masonry as a means of protection. It was not long before they had an opportunity as a large band came swooping toward them. He and his friend then made themselves known as Brothers, and two or three of the Indians respond-

⁵ *The New Age*, September, 1910.

ed and their company was never molested during the journey, and lost no stock; the Indians keeping faith with their white brothers.

Many years ago I read of a visit made in St. Louis by a delegation of Indian Chiefs, who were on their way to Washington to visit the Great White Father, as they termed the President of the U. S. In escorting these Indians about the city, they were taken to a Masonic Temple which had been recently erected. On being taken to the Lodge rooms, which had been decorated with Masonic Emblems on the walls and ceiling, they showed by signs and other expressions, that they were perfectly familiar with them.

In the *Square and Compass*, January, 1895, H. P. Bromwell published an interview he once had with a prominent Grand Master who told of helping initiate an Indian chief into Freemasonry. We quote part of this article:

He said that he noticed during the continuance of some of the ceremonies, something very peculiar in the manner in which the chief appeared to regard every part of the work—he acted as though he was no stranger to any part of the performance, but at the same time surprised at what he saw and heard, but he gave no intimation of what he thought, further than to say that he was very pleased and glad that he had received the knowledge of the degrees.

Some time after the chief came and said to him: "You have made me a Mason and I am very thankful to you and your lodge for what you have done for me. I wish now to do as much for you. I will make you a medicine man according to the rules of the medicine men of my tribe and of the family of tribes to which we belong. These rules have come down to us from very ancient times, and the mysteries of the medicine men are the highest honors which we can confer on any person."

My informant said he was much pleased with the chief's offer, and a time and place were appointed for the performance of the ceremonies and at the time set he went to the place with the chief and there met a number of the medicine men, and they conferred upon him the mysteries of a medicine man in ample form, in *three degrees*, but whether all at the same meeting or not I cannot now recollect.

In going through these ceremonies the brother Mason I speak of was as much surprised as the chief had been on going through the mysteries of the Masonic Lodge. Neither one was surprised by finding anything new, but in finding only that of which he had long been a *teacher*. My informant assured me that the work of those medicine men was well performed, and that it was in all its parts, except as to one word, substantially the same as the work of the three degrees of Masonry. The word which was different from ours was that last word as we now give it—since the separation of the final work of the Chapter from that of the Lodge—but signified the same as the final word formerly in the Lodge, and now used in the Chapters which retain, or have *restored* the old and proper word.

The visiting brother's description of the work was not very full, as we had but little time after the subject was mentioned. He felt entirely sure that the ceremonies through which he had passed in that Indian lodge could not have been borrowed from the white race at any time since the latter came to America, but were the genuine ancient mysteries of the medicine men (so-called) of the tribe mentioned, and some other related tribes, and had descended to them from their remote ancestors, of unknown antiquity.

He also said that he believed in many instances which have been reported, of Indian chiefs having spared the lives of white prisoners who had been condemned to death—because they gave some Masonic signs, that the chiefs did not act as they did because they thought the prisoners were Masons, but because they appeared to be medicine men, and that because many of the latter believed that the whites who were Masons had the medicine secrets, that they sought to be admitted to the mysteries of Masonry.

He also thought that there were different rites of initiation among different races of Indians, and that perhaps there were but few tribes, whose medicine men had preserved the rites which had been communicated to him, so that it might be that but seldom a chief in possession of them would come in contact with whites who were Masons.

In using the term medicine men, neither he nor I supposed that the Indians ever used those English words, any more than we supposed that they used the words *Black Hawk* or *Sitting Bull* as names for their chiefs. All these and many other similar names are well known to be the English equivalents for the Indian names, whatever the latter may be.

A famous anthropologist has said of certain ruins found in Central America :

Here in the interior we found massive stone carvings, seats, altars, statues or idols, sacrificial slabs, and stone walled graves and mounds, though no temples, or great structures. Yet in these graves and on the ancient sites the writer himself found images that ranged from life size to tiny figurines, carved from a volcanic stone, and he was impressed by the frequency in which the hands of these idols were found in certain suggestive positions.

In one type the Statues were shown standing erect, with hands held in front at about the height of the waist, the palms toward each other, usually with a human head between them. In another one arm was held down bent at the elbow the hand held horizontally, often clasping something, and the other arm raised, elbow bent, forming the angle of a square, and, often with something in it. If recollection serves, there was not always uniformity in which hand and arm were lowered, and which were raised. In the third and last form of these images, the person likewise stood erect, both arms bent at the elbows and with the hands pointing inwards, and the fingers touching the center of the abdomen. . .

So, whatever one may think of this misty fragmentary evidence, it is clear that in those parts of the Americas where it is known that civilization has longest held sway, operative masonry flourished at one time. Did the migrants from these regions who pushed out into the more temperate north carry any suggestion of the Craft, either Operative or Speculative, with them?⁶

In speaking of the ceremonies of the Indians of the southwest, the same authority has said :

Whether there are grips and words which Free and Accepted Masons would recognize is very doubtful. This is Primitive Masonry, and intelligible to us as such, but it is not Masonry as we practice it. Whence did it originate? Did it come from the ancient swarming place of all mankind in Central Asia? Did our Masonry have a similar source, but develop along different lines? Is it a degenerate memory of the practices of the ancient Operative Masons of Peru, and Yucatan and Mexico? Perhaps all of these theories are correct. Let us hope that future generations will discover the truth.

⁶ Alanson Skinner, *A Lecture on Indian Masonry*, pp. 9, 10.

Among many other American Indian tribes there are found secret societies and fraternities that have exercised the greatest influence upon the people at large. As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century the Jesuit missionaries of France noted many of these, and even saw portions of their rites, which they little comprehended. Of more recent years the trained ethnologists sent out by various American scientific institutions have seen and recorded many of these ancient rites, yet, as most of these men did not, unfortunately belong to our honorable Craft, they failed also to call attention to the many parallels that occur. The scope of this paper is too brief to enumerate all these American Indian fraternities, yet attention should be called to the Hopi, the Zuni, and other Indians of the deserts of New Mexico, and Arizona.

These so-called Pueblo tribes have the most elaborate ceremonies found in all the New World. They have their lodge rooms, their altars, and their secret rites. They teach their neophytes the philosophy of their religion and exact certain promises and obligations of them. While these people in their native state have no knowledge of the Bible or of Hebraic history, many of them have their own secret and sacred words, used only in the lodge, and which, because of the mystery with which they are enveloped have now lost ancient meanings. There are many "lost words" among them, and sometimes whole portions of their rituals are spoken in what is now a forgotten tongue, but which is clung to because of its antiquity and magic potency.

Certain it is that on the village sites of the Iroquois of Colonial times, Masonic emblems have been discovered that had evidently been in the possession of the Indians. There is, or was, in the Tioga Point Museum at Athens, Pennsylvania, an emblem of the Royal Arch found in an Indian grave in the immediate vicinity, and which probably dates to the period of the American Revolution.

The writer has in his possession two somewhat conventionalized Masonic emblems hammered and cut from silver coins by Iroquois silversmiths, and obtained from Seneca Indians. Many of these have been seen and noted among them, but usually the wearers were unaware of their significance, and even wore them upside down. . . .⁷

The prominent American Indian and Masonic authority, Arthur C. Parker, has said of the secret societies of his people:

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

We also have a religion which was given to our forefathers and has been handed down from father to son. . . . It is more than probable that the diversified customs, institutions and religions of the several nations of the world are less dissimilar in their origin than is often imagined. The differences arose in the progress of time

In America we are asked what the native Red Man has of Masonry and if he has signs, grips and words like those of the ancient craft. Oftentimes the question comes direct, "Are American Indians Masons?" Rumors have long been afloat that there are tribes that have Masonic lodges and that Masons traveling amongst them have been greeted by familiar signs and words and even led into lodges where ceremonies are conducted in due form. . . . If, perchance, they did not receive their Masonry from moderns, where in the annals of antiquity did they discover it? . . .

A thorough examination will reveal that the Indians had indeed a Freemasonry but not the accepted Masonry. But we may perhaps understand our Masonry better if we understand more of the Indian's Freemasonry.

After devoting several pages to an affirmative discussion of this problem and calling attention to many similarities between Freemasonry and certain ceremonials of his people, he concludes that:

The Zuni and other Pueblo dwelling peoples had elaborate lodge rooms or kivas and their altars were decorated and dedicated to the powers of nature. They taught their initiates the philosophies of their respective cults and exacted certain promises and obligations. . . .

There were societies that used sacred words some of which might be mentioned only at low breath and some never except within the lodge. Because of the secrecy and sacredness of the meaning of some words they lost their meaning and were used only because they were ancient and were supposed to be of magical value. There were many "lost words" and in some instances certain portions of the rituals were not intelligible because nearly every word was a portion of a lost ritualistic language.

There can be no doubt that certain Indian societies had secret words that their members might use in conversation or as signals. The possession of ritualistic words that belonged exclusively to the cult or fraternity were jealously guarded. . .

The wise men of the tribes knew that a band of men pledged to uphold morality and to enact rituals showing its advantages would constitute a dynamic influence.⁸

"Traditions and legends in occult lore," writes another Masonic authority, "furnish us a glimpse into such deep nature-truths that we are forced to conclude that these must be a portion of the thread-soul of the wisdom-religion itself. . . . They have their own Freemasonry as well as ours, for they are regular Masons as we are."⁹

In 1825 Ethan Smith published a book called *A View of the Hebrews*, in which he contended that the American Indians were the ten lost tribes of Israel. Concerning this subject he wrote:

Who taught the untutored savages to have a temple of Yehewah; a holy of holies in it into which no common people may enter or look? Who taught him a succession of high priests? That this priest must be inducted into office by purifications and anointing? That he must appear in an appropriate habiliment, the form of which descended from their fathers of remote antiquity? . . .

Let the unbeliever in revelation set himself to account for these events. No account can be given of them, but that they were derived from ancient revelation in Israel. (p. 264).

This is but a fragment of the available material insisting that something resembling Freemasonry was known to the American Indians before their contact with Europeans. We are safe in accepting the theory upon the testimony of numerous Masonic historians.

From a book published in 1829 we read:

Many Masonic symbols in the possession of Indians, are said to have been found by the first settlers. In the campaign of 1779, the commander in chief sent a strong force, under the command of Maj. Gen. Sullivan, into what was then called the *Susquehanna country*, to put a stop to the ravages of the Indians. After the different detachments had formed a junction, at Tioga Point, and

⁸ Arthur C. Parker, *American Indian Freemasonry*, pp. 7-22.

⁹ *The Philalethes Society*, June, 1937, Leaflet No. 2.

while they were yet there Col. Proctor of the Artillery, obtained from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, a warrant to hold, in the camp, a moveable Lodge of Freemasons; and during the progress of the army, this Lodge was opened almost every evening, at their nightly encampments. On arriving at Tioga, two tents were pitched for the accommodation of the Lodge. After the tents were set up, the bushes were cut away, and a thick coat of leaves, which apparently *had been gathering there for centuries*, was scraped away. Under all these was found an old IRON SQUARE, very much decayed, but still strong enough for the use of the Lodge; and it was appropriated to their use whenever the Lodge formed for Masonic business during the remainder of the expedition. What is remarkable in the affair is that, the country was a perfect wilderness; *nor was it known that the foot of a white man had ever previously ventured thus far into the wild haunts of savage man, and still more savage beasts*. The members of the Lodge considered this incident as an omen that they were encouraged, by the Great Master of Masons, to carry their art and mysteries into a new world. It is certainly a singular coincidence that, the square should be found on the *very spot* where the Lodge had assembled for Masonic purposes; and the fact of its being buried in the peculiar manner described, will not be regarded as unimportant evidence in the support of the hypothesis we are now considering.¹⁰

This has been said of the Indian's sign of friendship:

A ceremonial sign for peace, friendship, or brotherhood was made by the extended fingers, separated, interlocked in front of the breast, the hands horizontal with the backs outward. When this sign is represented as a pictograph, we have on the Indian chart what corresponds exactly to the clasped hands on the Masonic chart, which means the same thing.¹¹

¹⁰ Charles W. Moore, *History of Freemasonry*, p. 242.

¹¹ Robert C. Wright, *Indian Masonry*, p. 18.