



Nugget

Tessellated Border

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Origin of the Tessellated Border.

Summary

The origins of the Tessellated Border and its associated Tassels.

Keywords

Tessellated, Border, Tassels, Virtues

The Tessellated Border

The tessellated border is defined historically as that *'beautifully tessellated border or skirting, which surrounded the ground-floor of King Solomon's Temple'*.

The reasons for its current depiction in our Lodges is unclear, however, its origins can be assured from archived historical documents and illustrations.

The tessellated border is thought to derive from a previous meaning, tassellated border, which would have been illustrated using a two-coloured cord instead. Many first degree tracing boards are illustrated using a tassellated border of cord-work.

The question of which is correct is a difficult one, given the variety of names given to it in English rituals. We know by tradition, and by engravings that have been preserved, that during the Ceremonies of Initiation in the early part of the 17th century, the symbols of the Order were marked out in chalk on the floor, and that this picture was encircled by a waving cord. This indented tassel was subsequently corrupted by illiterate Masons into the indented tarsal.

This is supported by the four tassels that lie upon each corner, signifying the four Masonic cardinal virtues of Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice. Each would have been attached to the cord that skirted the mosaic pavement. This alludes to that kind care of Providence which so cheerfully surrounds and keeps us within its protection whilst we justly and uprightly govern our lives and actions.

The border has previously been referred to as *'the universal bond by which every Mason ought to be united to his brethren'* and that *'it should consist of sixty threads or yarns, because, according to the ancient statutes, no Lodge was allowed to have above sixty members'*.

A cord's significance would meet with the teachings of the Old Testament, in particular the Book of Numbers, *'Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribbon of blue: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God'*.

In operative times, the border would have acted as a barrier, or rope, to protect the inner chequered floor from disruption by the Operative Masons. This is why in the process of doing floor work, we 'square the floor'. By doing this we are respecting what guards the perimeter of the chequered floor, emblematic of the blessings and comforts which constantly surround us and which we hope to enjoy by a firm reliance on the Divine Providence, which is represented by the Blazing Star directly above.

In many Lodges the border is illustrated using difference colours. These are representative of the Holy Royal Arch degree, and symbolise the colours used to decorate the Tabernacle, in which the Ark of the Covenant and other holy items were transported across the desert. Therefore, in this case they illustrate our association with our Deity. In the Craft degree, the border symbolises the fraternal bond - the mystic tie - which binds us all, wherever so dispersed, into one band of brotherhood.

##END##

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Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study. Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

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- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

For further nuggets and other learning materials visit 'Solomon' at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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