



## Nugget

### Free and Accepted

**Index**

Origin of Free and Accepted.

**Summary**

Various possible origins of the terms 'Free and Accepted'.

**Keywords**

Operative, Speculative

## Free and Accepted

The origin of the term is not fully known, but there is a reference in Latin as early as 1391 from Oxford: 'Master Mason of Free-stone'. So the term may have emanated from this time. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the term 'Free-Mason' (two words), had emerged and this term was in use at the time of Elias Ashmole's Initiation in Warrington in 1646.

There are various reasons given for the use of the word 'Free'. It has been used to describe those who worked in and sculpted free-stone, which was fine-grained sandstone or limestone which lent itself to easy carving and sculpture. This was suitable for carving window frames and doors, capitals and other ornamentation of largely Gothic buildings such as Cathedrals and Minsters.

Another use of the word 'free' applied to a man who was free to work on his own, having completed his indentures. He was then free to be made a 'Freeman' of the Borough or City. There are records from York which show that to be a member of one of the local guilds you had to be a Freeman.

Another explanation that has been put forward, particularly in American Masonry, is that the candidate was a 'free-man' and not a slave.

Anyone who was born outside a marriage, i.e. illegitimately born, would not be regarded as free and in the superstitious 1700s and in the Old Manuscript Charges they required a prospective apprentice to be of 'honest parentage' or 'to come of good kindred'. Today, in this age of anti-discrimination the latter would not be acceptable and the Craft is opposed to anything of this kind. But who might not be a 'freeman' today in terms being acceptable to Freemasonry?

Actually, we need look no further than Form P, the application form to join a Lodge. It asks the question: 'Have you been convicted of any criminal offence to which you have received a custodial sentence?' This in effect means that any such person is therefore not 'free' to become a Mason.

The term 'Accepted' comes from those who came into Freemasonry as gentlemen or non-operative members, those who did not actually engage in the stonemason's trade. In the Masons Company of London there are records which show the '*making of a Mason*' or '*coming on the Acception*'.

One example is when two Army Generals were 'accepted' into a Scottish Lodge meeting at Newcastle upon Tyne in 1641. Neither had any connection with the stonemason's craft. This, incidentally, is the earliest record of anyone being initiated into Freemasonry on English soil. However, Ashmole's English record still stands, as they were initiated into a Scottish Lodge when the Scottish army invaded England. This was later confirmed in Lodge St. Mary's minutes in Edinburgh.

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Whatever historical evidence you prefer does not really matter, the importance of the term 'Free' for Freemasons today is that it refers to the state of mind of the Candidate at his Initiation. To become a Freemason, he needs to be ready to seek knowledge, led by the urging of his heart. But knowledge will not be found unless the mind is free to receive that knowledge, free from other daily and spiritual encumbrances and able to build each individual's own Temple as symbolically represented in the North East corner of the Lodge. The darkness at the beginning of the Initiation Ceremony is soon replaced by the light shining in the East into the receptive, free mind.

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##END##

### **Recommended use of Nuggets**

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:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.
- 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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