

Hello my name is Ben Brown, Director and Curator of the Clarke Historical Museum. In conjunction with our exhibit on the history of local fraternal organizations, Ray Hillman will be hosting a tour of some of the lodges on March 17th. The tour begins at 9:30am at the Masonic Temple in Eureka, tickets are \$18 for museum members, and \$20 for non members.

From the very beginning, Freemasonry was incredibly popular in Humboldt County. The county's first Masonic Lodge, Humboldt Lodge No 79, was founded in 1854, possibly making it the first fraternal organization established in Humboldt County. A second lodge, the Semper Virens Lodge was founded in 1923, after the Humboldt Lodge had grown to over 450 members in Eureka, which at the time had a population of 12,000.

The Freemasons-sometimes shortened to Masonry-see themselves as the oldest and largest fraternal organization in the world. They trace the earliest Masonic ideas to the mason workers of Solomon's Temple in the 5th century. The Freemasons of today connect with this lengthy lineage by incorporating symbols representing the Temple and masonry tools, such as pillars, checkered floor tiles, and the iconic square and compass.

The square and compass are architectural tools, representing the lineage from the actual trade of masonry, while the G stands for "God" or "Geometry". The G for geometry hails back to a time in the early centuries of the common era when geometry was a sacred form of math, and one that only certain people could learn it, such as stone masons who needed the geometry to construct buildings. The square and compass symbol occasionally appears on other appendant organizations to represent a connection with the Masons. With the development of Freemasonry over time, additional symbols were added such as the iconic All-Seeing-Eye.

Over its long history, Freemasonry has sprouted countless other organizations, some that reinterpret the symbols, add new ones or are majorly influenced by other cultures. It is notable that the Masonic and related appendant organizations like Job's Daughters are greatly influenced by the Christian Bible. However, Masons do not declare themselves to be a religiously based group and discussions on religion, politics, and business are not allowed at meetings.

The Sons of Norway building is located at 1619 California St, in Eureka and will be a stop on the tour. In the case of the Sons of Norway, Fram 13 located in Eureka, Han Trollness founded the local precursor to the Sons of Norway in the early 1900s to support local, homesick Norwegians through festivals and various social activities. Many of these activities allowed attendees a space to speak their home language, share in traditional foods, celebrate holidays and create close knit communities.

The Freemasons and the Sons of Norway are still a very active part of the local community today and their lodges will be a stop on the upcoming tour. There are limited tickets available, please contact the museum for more information or to purchase your ticket.

Be sure to catch the exhibit on local fraternal organizations on display until June 2nd at the Clarke Museum, located on the corner of 3rd and E in Old Town, Eureka.

This is Ben Brown with Community Comment.