

The Nine Muses And The Inquiring Mind

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The Nine Muses were Greek goddesses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne. They were held to be in charge of all Arts and Sciences, and have therefore come to be regarded as the sources of Inspiration in these fields. They tell us of what is, and what is to be, and what was before now. Inspiration has often been described as a gift from the Gods.

The Muses were first mentioned by Homer, the ancient Greek writer and historian, who seems to have lived about the 10th or 11th Century B.C. He said nothing definite about their names or number but simply that they were goddesses of song who dwell among the Gods on Olympus, where they sing at their banquets under the leadership of Apollo Musagetes.

Hesiod, another Greek writer who seems to have lived about a century later, was more informative. He stated that there were nine Muses and said that these were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne. Zeus is called the father of Gods and men. Mnemosyne was one of the great generation of Titans. Her name means memory. From this comes the notion that Memory is the mother of the Muses, or in other terms, Memory is the source of Inspiration.

The Greek word **MOUSAI** means, "the thinkers". The word "Muses" in Greek mythology was originally applied to nymphs of streams and then to goddesses of song, and, still later, to goddesses of song, poetry and the arts and sciences generally. Thus 3 muses were worshiped at Delphi, 7 are mentioned at Lesbos but the number 9 was used from the Classical period on. (Ref. 1)

In the early writings, the muses were not rigorously differentiated and any one of them could undertake any given function. In the Classical period, each muse became associated with a specific area of the arts and sciences.

The Muses became not only divine singers but also patrons of all intellectual activities, including the highest, everything that freed MAN from physical reality and gave him access to eternal truths. Eloquence, persuasion, wisdom, knowledge of the past and the laws of the world, mathematics, astronomy, all came within their province, as well as poetry and music and dancing.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (ref. 1) states that the original 3 muses were called Mneme, Melete and Aoide. Hesiod was the first writer to specify the number 9 and to name them. He called them Kleio, Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomme, Terpsichore, Erato, Polymnia, Ouranio and Kalliope.

These names have evolved slightly over the centuries and the current names and skill assignments are as follows;(Ref. 1)

Calliope - epic poetry
with wax tablet and pencil
Euterpe - lyric poetry
with double flute
Erato - erotic poetry
with small lyre
Melpomne - tragedy
tragic mask and ivy wreath
Thalia - comedy
comic mask and ivy wreath
Polyhymnia - sacred hymns
with veil, in thoughtful attitude
Terpsichore - coral song and dancing
with lyre
Clio - history
with a scroll
Urania - astronomy
with celestial globe

The word **Muse** has colored our language in several areas. The verb "**to muse**" means to be thoughtful or meditative and "**to amuse**" means to entertain the mind agreeably. Three other relatively common words also derived from the word muse are music, museum and mosaic.(Ref. 9)

The word from which **music** was derived was used to embrace all those arts and sciences over which the Nine Muses were held to preside. This included all branches of education concerned with the development of the mind as opposed to the body. The arts associated with the body were called gymnastic.(Ref. 1)

Thus the original meaning of **music** included widely different arts and sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, literature and even reading and writing, as well as the singing and setting of lyric poetry.

The word **museum** meant a temple of the Muses. It is now used as a place for the exhibition of objects from history, the arts or the sciences.

Mosaic meant belonging to the Muses. It is now applied to inlaid work formed by pieces of enamel, glass, stones, etc. cut and disposed to form designs and to imitate painting.

As the Nine Muses were considered the patrons of the arts and sciences, it was natural that they should attract the attention of Freemasons who strive for mastery in these fields. Every E.A. is charged to "devote his leisure hours to the study of such of the liberal arts and sciences as may lie within the compass of his attainment", and every F.C. is further charged that such a study will

polish and adorn his mind.

Kenneth MacKenzie (Ref. 3) states that the ritual of the Royal Order of Heredom of Kilwinning reveres the number 9 because there are 9 muses in harmony which polish human nature. It also adds that there are 9 orders of angels in the celestial hierarchy; namely Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels and Angels.

Freemasonry has from time immemorial considered these studies to be a fundamental part of the process of polishing the rough ashlar to produce the perfect ashlar. It has always strived to make good men better.

It is natural therefore that a number of lodges, particularly research lodges or those striving for perfection in these arts and sciences, should symbolize this striving by referring to the Muses in the name of the lodge.

Among the lodges which have done this were four chartered by the Grand Lodge of England and one chartered by the Grand Orient of France. (Ref. 6)

Three of the English constitution lodges were all founded in 1774 in St. Petersburg in Russia. They were:-

- The Lodge of the Nine Muses,
- The Lodge of the Muse Urania, and
- The Lodge of the Muse Clio.

The other English constitution lodge was founded two years later in London, England. This Lodge, The Lodge of the Nine Muses, (originally numbered 502 and now numbered 235), is still in existence.

The Lodge of the Nine Sisters (or Muses) was also founded in 1776 but this time in Paris by the Grand Orient of France, while it was still in amity with England.

This is the Lodge which Benjamin Franklin joined while he was in France as the Ambassador of the USA. He served as its Master for two terms. This Lodge encouraged active scholarship and oratory. Essays and addresses were often given in the Lodge by the members. It had the distinction of having many members of great skill and social standing. Some of its famous members were Voltaire, Lalond, the astronomer and Paul Jones; others were members of the French academy, Revolutionary party chiefs, painters, sculptors, musicians and titled men. The Lodge of the Nine Sisters was unfortunately swept away by the French Revolution, after over 70 years of distinguished existence.(Ref. 6)

It is interesting to note that, when back in Pennsylvania, Brother Franklin formed what was popularly known as the "Leather Apron Club". The rules required that every member should submit one or more questions on any subject or point of morals, politics, or natural philosophy for general discussion, and once every three months produce and read an essay of his own writing on any subject he pleases.(Ref. 8)

Thus a distinguished Freemason and Past Master of the Lodge of Nine Muses set a pattern which the Allied Masonic Degrees are proud to follow; to perfect, as nearly as possible, the harmony and skills of the mind which have motivated men through the centuries.

This brings us to the purpose of the Allied Masonic Degrees.

John Ross Robertson, a past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada, wrote (Ref. 10, pg. 34) that "the great mass of the fraternity are satisfied to pick the bare bones of the ritualistic skeleton, knowing nothing of the rich marrow which those bones contain. To break those bones requires labor, and, at the present day, labor without a reward measured by dollars and cents is too often foolishness. The few read, think and urge to progress; the great multitude are satisfied with present attainments, and prefer to 'sit down, rest, and refresh themselves'."

The goal of the AMD is to explore that marrow; to encourage and to facilitate the study and discussion of our symbols, history and traditions. We do not do this out of criticism of the importance of the ritual. The ritual is an essential part of Freemasonry, and becoming proficient in that ritual is an important part of the process of smoothing the rough ashlar. There is, however, more to Freemasonry than the ritual; there is marrow in the bones.

The purpose of gathering our brethren into AMD Councils is to complement our normal lodge experience. It is to bring together, in small groups, Freemasons who are interested in the advancement of **all** Masonry, preparing themselves to better serve the Craft through the medium of study and research. (Ref. 12) Many, perhaps most, lodges cannot sustain full time study groups. Our AMD Councils can draw men of Inquiring minds together from many local lodges to explore this important aspect of Freemasonry.

Indeed, as Allen Roberts says, (Ref. 11, pg. 73) in his book "Key to Freemasonry's Growth", "the key to achieving any goal in Freemasonry is to give every Freemason something Masonic to interest him." "The only thing a Freemason can get from a lodge that he cannot get better somewhere else is Freemasonry."

Our Councils, therefore should be viewed as complementary to our lodge life. Our real purpose is to stimulate interest in Masonry in general and bring together in small groups those who are interested in the study of Masonic subjects (Ref. 12).

This is the stuff of the Muses!! To provide stimulation to Inquiring minds and to Masonry in general. The purpose of the Council of the Nine Muses is to exemplify that goal. This Council should strive to stimulate study, research and discussion within our Councils. The members of our Councils should carry this enthusiasm back to their lodges and chapters to stimulate all Masonic bodies.

Let us do our part to ensure that all Inquiring minds are given something Masonic to interest them. Thus we can stimulate them to be more active Masons with the long term goal of making every Mason a life-long active member. (Ref. 11)

The Charge to the newly inducted Brethren states that there are two main purposes or goals for the Allied Masonic Degrees and they are to be treated as of equal value.

The first is to perpetuate a group of detached degrees which form part of our Masonic heritage. The second is "to bring together, in small groups, Freemasons who are interested in the advancement of all Masonry, preparing themselves to better serve the Craft through the medium of study and research".

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