

Robert Morris Honoring

Ken Carroll, Worthy Patron

Granite Chapter #5

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There is no doubt that Dr. Robert Morris deserves the credit and honor for the beginning of the Eastern Star Degrees. He took what he understood as Masonry and established the symbol of the star that now exists. He placed it upon a high moral status full of Biblical lore, the result of his historical research. Poems, songs and inspiration came from his busy mind. He always held the highest thought that Masonry should be for the entire family.

By the laws of the Ancient Order women were not eligible to its degrees. In the age when Masonry originated, women were in a low state of social development; by custom, she was regarded as man's inferior. There was a distinct line drawn between women and ladies, such that if you were of the House of a Lord or Prince royalty or were of Masonic affiliation, you were considered a lady.

Nothing Rob Morris did reflects more credit than his work in bringing the lessons of the Eastern Star into Drama of its five Degrees. This, however, did not meet the approval of Masons in general. He was accused of giving away Masonic secrets.

Morris knew he could not change the Ancient Landmarks of Masonry, so he looked for some method by which women of his day could share in the Order.

In 1850 while confined to his home, he developed the idea of the Eastern Star initiation degrees. He recalled a conversation with the wife of a brother Mason during which he explained how fortunate and what wonderful advantages come to women who were wives, daughters, widows and sisters of Master Masons. In their Obligation, Masons pledge to support the female relatives of brother Masons.

“If women needed assistance,” he said, “all they had to do was to make themselves known as entitled by virtue of relationship to a Mason.”

To this the woman replied, “Yes, but how are we to know who the Masons are, and how are they to know we are not impostors?”

It was true, women were not entitled to the degrees of Masonry and knew no way of making themselves known. Why not have an organization in which Masons, their wives, daughters, widows and sisters alike could be members? From this chance remark evolved the work and plan leading to the degrees of our present Order.

Robert Morris conferred the degrees on his wife, daughters and neighbors. They would assemble in a hall or home and the lecturer would tell the story of the heroines and “communicate” signs, passes and instruction in how to use them.

Adah: May we be ever mindful of Adah, who gave her life as a sacrifice to fulfill her father Jephthah’s promise to God. It teaches us that an obligation taken in God’s name is sacred.

Ruth: Ruth left her native Moab for an unknown land, without means, but with a strong faith and a deep sense of obedience and loyalty. She is an inspiring example of the fulfillment of an obligation.

Esther: Esther's life is a splendid illustration of true heroism in the accomplishment of her obligation to her people. We admire her and remember her for her integrity, courage, wisdom and devotion.

Martha: Our heroine Martha is our symbol of faith. With a strong conviction that Jesus would give life back to Lazarus, she was moved to go to him and ask him to perform the miracle we all know about. We learn from Martha that, although the road may seem to end, the Hand of God is ever reaching out to guide us along new paths toward the performance of our obligations.

Electa: Electa, known for her charitable goodness is a glorious example of courage in the execution of her obligations. When asked to renounce her Christian Faith, she refused and chose death on the cross. Electa's lesson is fearlessness in living up to our convictions.

May we also be steadfastly loyal to our obligations as were those wonderful women of ancient times. Let us reaffirm our pledge, and let us be faithful to the trust placed in us as members of the Order of the Eastern Star.