



## ROYAL ARCH MASONRY – Part 1

According to the Regius Poem (also called the Haliwell manuscript, discovered in the XVII century and accepted as the oldest document referring to the Masonry), the foundation of the York Rite masonry laid over more than a thousand years ago. Along with a legend (The Legend of the Four Crowned Martyrs), the paper deals with the appearance of Masonry in England during the reign of King Athelstan (924-939), the nephew of Alfred the Great, the most prominent personality of the House of Wessex. After the conquest of Northumbria with the capital at York, Athelstan became in 926 the first Anglo-Saxon ruler of the whole kingdom of England. It is noted that the masons at that time addressed to the King in order to guide them to conduct and settle the rules of the guild. The King, together with the nobles and wise men of the Kingdom, elaborated 15 articles and 15 points named in Regius Poem: The Constitutions of the Art of Geometry after Euclid.



The 15 articles and 15 points can easily be recognized by today's Masons as encompassing the fundamental principles of Masonry as they were passed on to us.

According to other sources, the Constitutions contained 107 pages and were discussed at a General Assembly of the Guild in which they were adopted.

The King's step brother, Edwin, is credited by the same

sources as the First Grand Master of the Grand Lodge.

The Grand Lodge of York was later named Grand Lodge of All England, which intermittently operated in the 18th century and whose minutes were partially preserved. On December 27, 1813 at Freemason's Hall in London, through the union of the Grand Lodge of the Ancients and the Grand Lodge of Moderns, the United Grand Lodge of England was born. In the second article of the Unification Act, it is stated: "It is stated and stipulated that the most pure Antique Masonry has three degrees and no more, that are: Approved Apprentice, Companion and Master Mason, which also includes the supreme order of the Holy Royal Arch, but this article does not prohibit the Lodge from meeting and working in chivalric orders in accordance with the Constitutions of these Orders."

Initially, Mason of the Royal Arch did not represent a degree being considered the completion of a degree, hence the name is sometimes attributed to an Order or Rite. This concept was inherited from the English ritual, but the phrase "completing the Master Mason degree" was officially abandoned in 2004 by the English Masonry.



In the beginning, the Royal Arch degree was conferred under the authority of a Symbolic Lodge. At that time after the first three degrees were conferred, there were several intermediate degrees: Past Master (IV degree), Excellent Master (V degree), Super Excellent Master (VI degree) and finally Royal Arch Mason (VII degree). The degrees have been renamed as we know them today in 1797 when the General Grand Chapter of the United States of America was founded, as follows: Mark Master, Past Worshipful Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch Mason.

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