

# The Origins of Freemasonry

From very early times Guilds or Companies of Craftsmen; Carpenters, Builders, Blacksmiths, etc., have existed in the Community.

In the Middle-ages Merchants Guilds became very well organised. They admitted apprentices, and they gave charters of proficiency to their members from whom they sometimes asked high fees for membership.

The Guild of Masons (or Builders) differed from all the others: whereas, for example the blacksmith would ply his trade in his own town. A Mason frequently had to travel long distances, even to the other end of the country, to engage in his work.

The Mason had to prove his proficiency by his rank in the Guild from which he came. This he did by showing that he was in possession of certain secrets which he learned from his Guild.

The Guilds, or Companies of Craftsmen, at first contained only Operative Masons (i.e. Builders). However, from the Sixteenth Century and onward, Speculative Freemasons (i.e. Non-Builders), were admitted. Over time Masonry became entirely Speculative.

**Candidates for Freemasonry are progressively *initiated* into Freemasonry, first in the degree of an Entered Apprentice. At some later time, in separate ceremonies, they will be *passed* to the degree of Fellowcraft; and then sometime later *raised* to the degree of Master Mason.**

The following photograph is from New Zealand. Lodge Rooms vary in design.

