

TRESTLEBOARD and TRACING BOARD

The argument whether they are the same things is obscure and prejudicial. The two terms came from their use in the rituals of the 18th century. In its present form it should remind us of the board upon which the Master Masons in medieval days set out his plans for the building.

The first presentation of the idea of drawing designs appears in a *MASON'S CONFESSION*, an expose of the ritual published in 1727. Three years later there appeared the first mention of a drawing board of any kind in *MASONRY DISSECTED* by Samuel Prichard in 1730.

In these excerpts we have the idea of drawing on the floor and drawing on a board. Both are used for the same purpose, although some authorities draw a distinction between them, asserting that the former sets in the lodge on a trestle which is supported on two saw horses and the latter which contains only the fixed drawing of the symbol of a degree and lies on the floor.

Speculative Freemasons needed some vehicle to explain the symbols as much as the operative Mason did to exhibit the plans for a building. These symbols, emblems, points, lines, superficies, solids, steps, etc were first drawn with chalk upon the wooden floor where the lodge was to meet usually by the Tiler and later erased by the youngest entered apprentice with a mop and pail.

Next there were floor cloths consisting of permanent designs painted on oil cloth or canvas which could be rolled up and carried away. The earliest known were from France in 1745.

It seems as either the Trestle Board or the Tracing Board might have been adopted by early ritualists. Webb lectures read as follows: "The movable jewels are the rough ashlar, perfect ashlar and the trestle board."

We are reminded that as the operative workman erects his building agreeable to the rules and designs laid down by the Master on his trestleboard, so should we, endeavor to erect our spiritual building agreeable to the rules and designs laid down by The Supreme Architect of the Universe.

We conclude that the tracing aboard used to drawn designs upon or exhibit designs already drawn and if supported on an easel it is a trestle board.

All of this is now giving way to more modern means such as slides, DVD's, videos and projectors. Perhaps even virtual reality methods are in the near future, even holograms.

SOURCES:

1. Smyth, F., A REFERENCE BOOK FOR FREEMASONS>
2. Coil, H. W., COIL'S MASONIC ENCYCLPEDIA, McCoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc. 2nd ed