

**The Solomon Key:  
Freemason Symbols In Washington, D.C**

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In his highly acclaimed novel The Da Vinci Code, Dan Brown often utilized symbols that were hidden while in plain sight. Brown's extensive use of symbology added to the mystique and intrigue that made his novel so popular. Considering the fact that symbols play a crucial part in Dan Brown's novels, symbology will most likely also play a vital role in his future novel, The Solomon Key. Brown has already left a number of clues hinting that The Solomon Key will focus around the topic of Freemasons and has referenced that it will take place within Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, his new book will likely be filled freemasonry symbols.

Incorporating symbology should be simple considering that Freemasons attach symbolic significance to an extensive list. All Masonic rituals make use of the architectural symbolism of the tools of the medieval operative stonemason. Freemasons use this symbolism to teach moral lessons of the principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. While the world of masonry is rich with symbology, I have chosen to focus on a limited selection of prominent Masonic symbols including geometric shapes (squares, circles, triangles), numbers (three, five, seven, nine, thirteen), a drawing compass, and the three pillars. All these symbols will show that a prime location for Brown to incorporate these Masonic symbols is Washington, D.C, where many of these symbols can be found in abundance throughout our nation's capitol, an ideal set of coincidences for a conspiracy novel.

According to some sources including Hodapp, MacNulty, The Initiated Eye, and The Revelation, there is hidden Masonic symbolism within a number of buildings in our

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, Greg. The Guide to Dan Brown's The Solomon Key. Camarillo, CA: DeVorss & Company, 2005.

nation's capital. These include the House of the Temple, the U.S capitol building, Decatur House, and the National Cathedral. Ultimately, my research into these famous sites and their many connections to Masons should serve as a useful guide to Dan Brown's upcoming novel The Solomon Key.

## **Geometry**

The first texts that mention freemasonry, the Regius and Cooke manuscripts of 1390 and 1425, are classified as "The Old Charges" and equate freemasonry with geometry: "The fifth science of geometry, also known as freemasonry. It is the art of measuring everything on Earth and in Heaven" (Beresniak, 50). These sources imply that geometry is more than just the art of measuring. The definition of geometry states: "In the Fellowcraft Degree, geometry is a symbol not only of mathematics but of the divine and moral significance of abstract truth," (Beresniak, 51) as defined by the Grand Lodge of Michigan. Since measuring entails the act of proving, the progress of this art teaches how to establish the truth of a proposition by means of its tools, the set square and compass.

In the middle ages, authority, such as priests, handed down knowledge. However, geometry could not be passed on this way. A theory about shapes can only be recognized when it has been validated through reason. Therefore, the teaching of geometry recognizes students who find meaning on their own through rational thought, not from higher, and perhaps fallible, sources. Definitions of freemasonry often emphasize that a mason is someone who proves by verification, paying strict attention to the reason and not social status. In this way, the square and compass represent the tools of a free man,

symbolic to the extent that they represent the shape and skill of the human soul in material form.<sup>2</sup>

The square and compass also refer to how to lead a correctly lived life. A square can symbolize building a life truthfully, and the compass can symbolize the spiritual or



higher nature of man<sup>3</sup>. According to MacNulty, in Freemasonry a Masonic motto is to “keep within the compass and you shall be sure to avoid many troubles that others endure” (18). The symbolism behind the square can be traced back to the Egyptians, who considered the square their highest and most sacred emblem. The base of every pyramid was a perfect square. The Chinese used the square to represent Good, and Confucius

speaks of the square to represent a just man in his writings. The square justly represents truth because there can be nothing truer than a perfect square.<sup>4</sup> In a metaphysical view, the square represents the soul and the compass represents the spirit.<sup>5</sup> Masonic rituals make use of the compass to suggest that just as the heavens are higher than earth, the spiritual is higher than the material<sup>6</sup>. Thus, the spiritual in man should govern his thoughts and actions. Masons strive to teach their brothers “to square his actions by the

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<sup>2</sup> Information on the square and compass in relation to geometry from Symbols of Freemasonry by Daniel Beresniak

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.masonicdictionary.com/sac.html> ---Source: The Builder October 1916

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.masonicdictionary.com/sac.html>

<sup>5</sup> Beresniak, Daniel. Symbols of Freemasonry.

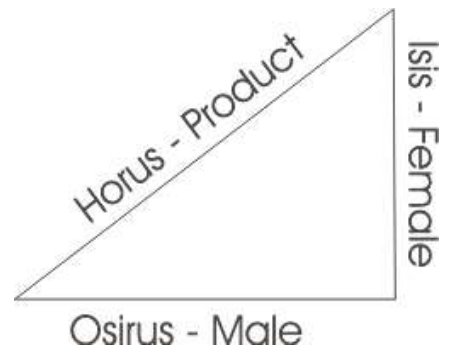
<sup>6</sup> “Masonic Numbers.” Masonic Dictionary. 7 October 2007.

<http://www.masonicdictionary.com/sac.html>

square of virtue while using the compass to circumscribe his desires and keep his passions within due bounds” (MacNulty, 276) With these tenets, freemasons strive to achieve a higher meaning in life, above material wants and among spiritual accomplishments.

Another important geometric shape is the triangle. The triangle is significant to freemasons because of its connection to the number three and because it represents the deity in geometric form. The triangle appears in masonry in two forms: the right triangle and the equilateral triangle. The equilateral triangle can be found in the Ineffable Degrees and the sacred delta. The seats of the principal officers of the sacred delta are arranged in a triangle. In addition, the three lesser lights (an important Masonic term) also are arranged to form an equilateral triangle, and the square and compass form two equilateral triangles which meet at their bases by their union on the greater light. The equilateral triangle always symbolizes the Grand Architect of the Universe. Due to the fact that it is wholly symmetrical, the equilateral triangle is perfect. Thus it follows that the equilateral triangle symbolizes the Perfect Being, or Deity, a representation that has been accepted by many nations of ancient times.

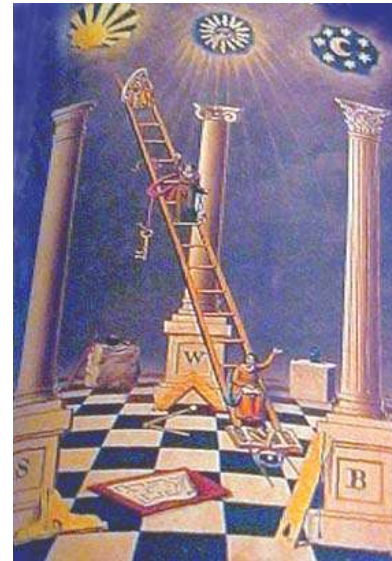
The right triangle, although similar to the equilateral triangle, has a slightly different meaning. Egyptians considered the right triangle a symbol of universal nature, and masons seem to have also adopted this use. From the forty-seventh problem of Euclid, we know that the sum of the squares of the two shorter sides equal the square of the hypotenuse. Fully aware of this, the Egyptians thought to have the base represent Osirus



(the male), the other leg symbolize Isis (the female), and the hypotenuse represent the product of the two: Horus (the son). Thus, the right triangle presents God's "great handiwork universal nature"<sup>7</sup> to the mason.

### **The Three Pillars**

In many rites, three columns topped with three candles or candlesticks are placed in the lodge. These columns, or pillars, stand for the trinity of Wisdom-Strength-Beauty. Wisdom is required for invention, Strength is necessary to accomplish tasks, and beauty is for decoration<sup>8</sup>. Reaching far back into history, pillars have been used for commemorative, monumental and symbolist purposes. Egyptians used pillars to record extraordinary events, important facts, triumphs, and stories of magnificence by carving these histories upon the pillars.



Three Pillars Tracing Board

Biblical people also used pillars in a similar manner to the Egyptians. Pillars in a group can be found in many instances of religion or ancient mystery. In many cases the pillars are a presentation of a triad. The mythology of India included the concept of the pillars, and to this culture the pillars were considered to be located in the east, west, and south bearing the names of wisdom, strength, and beauty, a perfect match for Masonic interpretations.

Masons learn that the three supporting pillars of the Lodge are the very same. The brotherhood teaches its members that there should be, "Wisdom to contrive, Strength to

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<sup>7</sup> Information on triangles from <http://www.masonicdictionary.com/triangle.html>

<sup>8</sup> Beresniak, Daniel. Symbols of Freemasonry.

support, and Beauty to adorn all great and important undertakings” (Hodapp, 209). The lodge represents the world, therefore the ultimate meaning of the three pillars are the deity; he whose wisdom contrived the world, whose strength supports the world, and whose beauty adorns the world<sup>9</sup>.

Three specific Greek pillars the Freemasons use are the Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian columns. The Ionic pillar is massive with a scroll or book at the top. It is a fluted column and it has a very important worth in the Lodge,



for it represents Wisdom. The Doric pillar is also massive, but has a circle at the top. This pillar is the first of the Greek columns and represents Strength. The pillar of beauty is the Corinthian Column, fluted with a

spray of God's creation of beauty, flowers. The fern that graces the top of this column alludes to the beautiful city of Ancient Greece, Corinth, from which the pillars gets its name. The Pillar of Beauty is the final result when Wisdom and Strength work together<sup>10</sup>.



## Numbers

In freemasonry, the numbers three, five, and seven seem to be of utmost importance to freemasons. Throughout masonry, there are countless references to the number three. For example, there are three greater and lesser lights, three steps on the Master's Carpet, three steps at the beginning of the Winding Stairs, three principal officers, three degrees, and three due guards. As one can see, the emphasis of the number

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<sup>9</sup> “The Three Pillars of Freemasonry.” 3 November 2007.

<<http://arkphagrandlodge.com/threepillars.htm>>

<sup>10</sup> Information on the three Greek pillars from <http://arkphagrandlodge.com/threepillars.htm>

three is reiterated everywhere in masonry. The number three is another way of expressing the sacred idea of the triangle. Therefore, the number three is another symbol for the Deity<sup>11</sup>.

Throughout many degrees in freemasonry numerous allusions to the sacred and mystical number five can also be found. In the Fellow Craft's Degree five people are required to hold a lodge. In winding stairs, five steps are referred to as the orders of architecture and the five human senses. In the third degree, the masons refer to the five points of fellowship and the five-pointed star. Finally, Geometry (as discussed previously has been deemed synonymous with Freemasonry) is called the fifth science. The number five was also a mystical number among Pythagoreans because the union of the first even number and the first odd number forms the five ( $2+3=5$ ). Therefore, five symbolized the "mixed conditions of order and disorder, happiness and misfortune, life and death." Among Greeks, five was a symbol of the world and five was a sacred round number among the Hebrews. Some oriental nations such as Egypt and India considered five the fifth or highest essence of power in a natural body.<sup>12</sup>

### **Layout of Washington D.C**

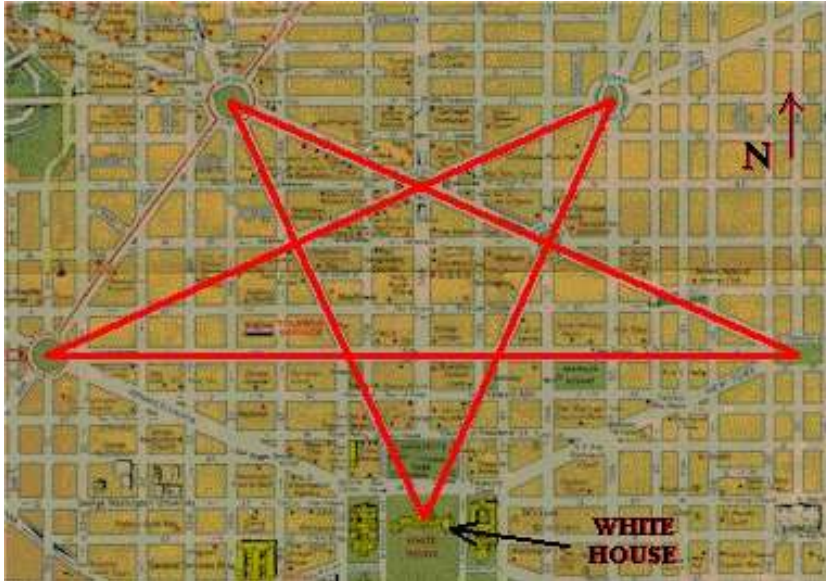
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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.grandlodgemi.org/symbols-in-freemasonry.cfm?cID=94&getAlpha=T>

<sup>12</sup> Information on the number five taken from <http://www.masonicdictionary.com/numbers.html> who received all their information from Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*.



The layout of the capital actually contains many Masonic references. For example, a five-pointed star, a compass, a straightedge, and several well-placed squares



and circles can be found on the map of Washington. As the diagram below demonstrates, a five-pointed star is formed by Dupont Circle, Logan Circle, Scott Circle, Mt.

Vernon square, and the White House. It is interesting to note that all the points of the star, excluding the White House, are circles or squares. The next diagram shows the other Masonic symbols that can be found on the map of Washington, D.C. The square is formed by Louisiana Avenue and Washington Avenue. A compass is formed with the Capitol as the top, two legs stretching down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, and along Maryland Avenue



toward the Jefferson Monument. Note that the legs of this compass do not actually stretch down two unbroken streets.<sup>13</sup>

The original planner of the capitol, L'Enfant, designed the central area of the city in the shape of a triangle. The three sides are formed by the base which runs from L'Enfant's proposed site for a monument to George Washington east to the Capitol Building, the hypotenuse which runs from the Capitol up Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, and the vertical side is the north/south line passing through the White House and the proposed Washington Monument site. The Freemason's Rule, or straightedge, can be clearly seen if a straight line is drawn south from the White House center to the base of the Washington Monument and then straight East to the Capitol.

### **The Capitol Building**

The Capitol Building also includes Masonic symbolism throughout this important national building. One of the Capitol's principal architects, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, was a Freemason. The British burned the building in 1814, Latrobe both originally designed the capitol and also supervised its reconstruction until his death. The Capitol exhibits many columns in the Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian Orders of Architecture that, as mentioned previously, represent Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. Statuary Hall, a circular room originally the location of the House of Representatives, presented problems during reconstruction and became a room to display sculptures. Corinthian columns surround this area and of the hundred statues on display there, thirty are of Masons. Some

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<sup>13</sup> Both images of maps of Washington, D.C from <http://www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/chapter3/>

freemason statues include Henry Clay, James A. Garfield, Brigham Young, and Lewis Cass. The crypt that was meant to hold the body of George Washington reveals some Freemason



Painting depicts intended crypt<sup>14</sup>

principles as well. The tremendous weight of the rotunda is transferred to the crypt through delicate elliptical vaults onto a double and single circle of unfluted Doric columns.

The building is also adorned with many pieces of artwork. A most noteworthy work is Constantino Brumidi's fresco, *The Apotheosis of Washington*, that has panels representing War,

Science, Marine,

Commerce, Mechanics,

and Agriculture. The

Science image depicts a

teacher demonstrating

the correct use of

compasses.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>14</sup> "The Initiated Eye: Secrets, Symbols, Freemasonry and the Architecture of Washington, DC." 3 November 2007.

<http://www.archfoundation.org/octagon/exhibitions/initiatedeye/index.htm>>

<sup>15</sup> Information on the Capitol House from Solomon's Builders: Freemasons, Founding Fathers, and the Secrets of Washington, D.C. by Christopher Hodapp

Image of *The Apotheosis of Washington* from <http://www.atlantic-cable.com/Capitol/capitol.htm>

## Decatur House

Another important building Benjamin Henry Latrobe designed was Decatur House, one of the most distinguished homes historically as well as architecturally in Washington, D.C. The house was built in 1819 near the President's house for Freemason Stephen Decatur. The distinguished architecture and prominent location made Decatur House a desirable abode and home for some of the nation's leading figures such as General Edward Beale and Henry Clay.

Latrobe made great use of freemason concepts in the design of the house. The vestibule's reconciliation of three geometric forms (rectangle, circle, and semicircle) is one of Latrobe's architectural contributions that awarded him fame, one first seen in his designs for the Capitol. The vestibule is a highly refined combination of a rectangle, square and semicircle in black and white marble that is offset by a barrel vault, shallow dome, and semicircle above.<sup>17</sup>



Painting depicts vestibule of Decatur House<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Decatur House image from

<http://www.archfoundation.org/octagon/exhibitions/initiatedeye/index.htm>

<sup>17</sup> "The Initiated Eye: Secrets, Symbols, Freemasonry and the Architecture of Washington, DC." 3 November 2007.

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## The House of the Temple

The House of the Temple, also called the Temple for the Scottish Rite, serves as the home of the Supreme Council 33° of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry. This building, which lies precisely thirteen city blocks north of the White House, has become one of the most well respected classical designs in the world.

Masonic symbolism naturally adorns this beautiful building. The steps of the House of the Temple are tiered in sets of three, five, seven and nine and thirty-three columns, each thirty-three feet high, support the dome<sup>18</sup>.



Thirty-three beams of light radiate from an eagle down to the exterior view of the House of the Temple at the Pillars of Charity. The double headed eagle can be found in abundance throughout the building and there are numerous Masonic paintings. The grand stair that leads to the Supreme Council Chamber is filled with Masonic iconography and decorated with a variety of classical symbols derived from archaeological sources. In addition, the architect uses light to lead a brother toward the Temple Room.



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<sup>18</sup> “The Initiated Eye: Secrets, Symbols, Freemasonry and the Architecture of Washington, DC.” 3 November 2007.  
<http://www.archfoundation.org/octagon/exhibitions/initiatedeye/index.htm>

## **Freemason Conspiracy?**

Some conspirators claim that Freemasons played a powerful role in the founding of our country for devious and even evil purposes. There does not seem to be enough substantial evidence to support these claims. Many high officials of society happen to be Freemasons; a brief glance at the number of freemason presidents quickly proves this point. Many of the Masonic references found in Washington, D.C may have been subconsciously implemented merely because Freemason tenets are so ingrained upon members of the brotherhood. On the other hand, Freemasonry is definitely prevalent in Washington, D.C, and specifically mysterious Freemason symbology. Whether this is coincidence or hints at purposeful actions with further meaning, there certainly seem to be enough Freemason symbols within Washington, D.C that Brown could draw upon for a conspiracy novel.

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