

**SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT  
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“Auld Lang Syne”, the song usually sung at New Years, that says, “we will drink a cup of kindness dear, for Auld Lang Syne”. The lyrics of the song celebrate the use of intoxicating beverages. Just how does this relate to Freemasonry, one might ask? The song lyrics are from the poem written by Bro. Robert Burns, the renowned Scottish poet. Robert Burns was initiated into St. David Tarbolton Lodge in Scotland on July 4, 1781.

The history of the use of intoxicating liquor and freemasonry is fascinating. The use of intoxicating liquor in a lodge hall is covered by Code 485 in the Book of Constitution and By-Laws of our Illinois Grand Lodge. This Code states, “A lodge shall not on any pretense, introduce intoxicating Liquors at any official lodge function in the building where the lodge is meeting during such an event”. Code 486 goes further, stating, “Masons are prohibited from appearing in drinking saloons in their Masonic clothing and any Mason thus offending shall be disciplined”. This is the state of the current Masonic law regarding intoxicating liquors in Illinois.

But it was not always thus. When I became a Mason, anyone in the business of dealing with intoxicating liquors could not become a Mason. Thus, tavern or bar owners, liquor store owners, distributors, etc., were forbidden from petitioning a Masonic lodge. However, the history of our fraternity discloses that in earlier times this prohibition of intoxicating liquors and the holding of Masonic meetings in establishments that sold these beverages was not only tolerated, but it was the rule.

Prior to the year 1717 groups of operative, and later speculative Masons met together as individual lodges. On St, John the Baptist Day, June 24, 1717 four lodges got together in the City of London, to form the first Grand Lodge. These four lodges met at, The Goose and Gridiron Ale House in St. Paul’s Churchyard, The Crown Ale House in Parker Lane near Drury Lane, The Apple Tree Tavern in St, Charles Street, Covent Garden, and at The Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel Row, Westminster. As it can be seen, all four of the original lodges that formed the Grand Lodge of England meet in venues that served alcoholic liquor. Three of these lodges are reported to be still in I

In the year 1716, these four lodges along with some other “old Brothers” met at the Apple Tree Tavern and formed the Grand Lodge pro tempore, placing the oldest Master Mason in the chair. These brethren resolved to hold an Annual Assembly and feast. This culminated in the formation of a Grand Lodge as set forth in the preceding paragraph. The meeting on June 24, 1717 took place at the Goose and Gridiron Ale House. These facts were set forth by Dr. James Anderson who wrote the Anderson Constitution in the year 1723.

When the fraternity of Freemasons emigrated to the United States, the first lodges were lodges formed as Provincial Lodges in the colonies. Some of these lodges were loyal to the King, and others were formed of patriots who were some of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and writers of our United States Constitution.

Prior to becoming a Mason, Benjamin Franklin wrote, in his Philadelphia Gazette, for December 8, 1730, “that there were several lodges of Freemasons in this Province ....”. Franklin became a Mason about two months after this article appeared. This fact in our Masonic history was recorded in Libre B, the oldest Masonic document for this county still preserved. Libre B also recorded, in June, 1731, that there was a lodge that met at the Tun Tavern in Philadelphia. This lodge met at the Tun Tavern monthly from June 24, 1731 until June 1737. After a year passed, the final meeting at Tun Tavern was in June, 1738.

The only lodge remaining today of the approximately 100 of the early lodges is St. Andrew's Lodge of Boston. Among the brethren of St. Andrew's Lodge were Paul Revere, John Hancock, along with others who were signatories to our founding documents. St. Andrew's Lodge met at the Green Dragon Tavern, another establishment serving intoxicating liquors. In fact, the minutes of St. Andrew's Lodge for one meeting in 1773 states that, "the consignees of Tea took up the brethren's time". On December 16, 1773 the minutes of St. Andrew's Lodge are filled only large capital "Ts". This happened to be the date of the Boston Tea Party.

The history of Freemasonry in the United States is silent as to its association with drinking establishment until it was re-established as a result of the Morgan Affair. The disappearance of Captain William Morgan resulted in an anti Masonic sentiment in the United States. For many years anti Masonic feeling was strong in the United States. An anti Masonic political party was formed which actually ran candidates for public office.

But the desire for banding together in fraternal organizations did not go away. Freemasonry was still present, although it could successfully re-establish itself. It was the result of this re-establishment that the Grand Lodges did not wish to anger the anti Masonic populace. During the 1840s, in an effort to rebuild the image and public confidence in the fraternity, that Grand Lodges passed regulations prohibiting the use of alcoholic beverages in Masonic buildings and meeting in order to diminish the possibility of boisterous behavior that often took place in the lodge meetings prior to the Morgan affair.

During the early 1800s there was also a growing temperance movement in the United States. Temperance associations were formed and the populace produced a growing animosity against the use of alcoholic liquor. This reached its zenith when the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was passed in 1920, ending in 1933. Use of alcoholic beverages was not only banned in lodge halls by order of the many Grand Lodges, it was illegal throughout the United States. This prohibition against the use of intoxicating liquors has existed to the present time in various forms throughout Freemasonry in our country.

The Auld (old) Acquaintance with intoxicating liquors has, indeed, "been forgot" in the United States. The Codes cited at the beginning of this paper are still in existence. The words, "auld lang syne", translated from the old Scotch, literally means, from times long ago. We, in Freemasonry, have forgotten the times long ago when the use of intoxicating liquor was not only condoned, but also our lodges met in drinking establishments.