



It is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honourable than the Star or Garter.

Why do we wear an apron, and what is its significance? Our Order is founded on Operative Masonry, and operative Masons in common with most other artisans, wear aprons for the protection of their clothing. Different trades used different types of aprons, each suitable for the purpose.

Originally the Entered Apprentice wore an apron with a bib secured with a tape around his neck. The bib was to protect the upper part of his clothing when clasping a heavy stone, such as a pillar, with both arms. Later, as he became proficient in his trade, he became an artisan and his job was then to smooth and prepare the stone for its place in the building. He then had no use for the upper portion of the apron, so he let it hang down over the lower part--thus we have our own badge with a triangular piece overlapping the square portion.

When investing the Entered Apprentice with the badge he is informed that it is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle and more honorable than the Star and Garter. The original wording of the investiture was compiled in about 1717 (in the Grand Lodge of England for its Lodges) and was later revised in 1813.

[Golden Fleece](#)

According to Greek legend, King Pelias of Thessaly had ousted his brother Aeson and to rid himself of Aeson's son, Jason he persuaded the lad to fetch the Golden Fleece which hung on an oak tree at Ares in Colchis. It was guarded by a dragon. The adventures of Jason and his fifty companions, who sailed with him, make one of the finest stories of Greek literature. (The fleece came from the mythical ram on which Phrixus and Helle escaped from death, and was hung in the Grove at Ares by Phrixus, who alone survived the flight from his native land.)

The Order of the Golden Fleece was founded by Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, in January, 1429, on occasion of his marriage to Isabella, daughter of King John I, of Portugal. The fleece was chosen as the emblem because wool was the predominate product of the lower European countries in which the order flourished. The number of knights in the order was twenty-four. In 1433 the number was raised to thirty-three, all gentlemen by birth. In 1477, on the marriage of Mary of Burgundy with Duke Maximilian, the grand mastership of the order passed to the House of Hapsburg. The last chapter of the original Order was held by Philip II of Spain in the cathedral of Ghent. After the Spanish Netherlands were ceded to Austria in 1713-14, the Austrians claimed the office. The resulting dispute split the order into two parts—one in Austria and one in Spain.

The jewel of the order (which differs slightly in the two countries) is a golden ram hanging from a ring which is passed around its middle. This is suspended from a scroll in very elaborate design with the motto; (in Latin) "The reward of labor is not trifling." The jewel is attached to a golden collar made up of links in the form of a capital "B" with rays issuing from it.

Since its inception this order has been considered as the most important and highest of all civil orders on the European continent. The order has no standing in England; hence we hear little of it. No

British subject is permitted to accept this, or any other foreign order, without special permission from the sovereign. In 1714, speculative Masonry was gaining a firm footing and its ritual was then revised and prominence given to the Golden Fleece.

[The Roman Eagle](#)

The Roman Eagle also has an interesting history. The eagle was highly esteemed among the Romans. It was usually depicted with outstretched wings, sometimes of gold and silver, but most frequently of bronze. It was carried at the head of a staff in the same manner as a banner.

The eagle borne upon a spear appears to have been used first by the Persians.

The Romans took the idea from them, and used it as an emblem of honor, to be carried before the chief ruler. In 1804, Napoleon had metal eagles carried before his army. Austria and Russia both had double eagles as a symbol of their empires. The symbol of the United States of America is the bald eagle.

The revisers of our rituals probably selected the reference to the Roman Eagle as it was the highest emblem of dignity, honor and power of that famous empire.

[Order of the Garter](#)

The Order of the Garter is, of course, something we know more about, being a British Order. It is the highest order of knighthood in Great Britain, and is considered the most honorable and exclusive in the world. Its full title is "The Most Noble Order of the Garter." According to tradition, King Edward III, who was dancing with the Countess of Salisbury at a ball held on January 18, 1343, picked up a blue garter that had dropped from her leg and tied it around his own, setting in motion an idea to form an order of Knighthood to honour his recent success in the French campaign, and a way to reward his army favorites.

For 179 years it remained practically as instituted by Edward III but in 1522, Henry VIII revised the statutes. All appointments are made by the reigning sovereign. Originally it was called the Order of

Saint George. It now consists of the sovereign, the Prince of Wales and twenty-five knights' companions. In addition it is open to all English princes and foreign sovereigns as may be chosen by the king or queen, so that the whole order usually numbers about fifty. The star of 8 silver rays encrusted with diamonds was added by Charles 1 in 1692

The garter is of blue velvet ribbon-known as "garter blue." and fastened by a gold buckle on the left leg below the knee. It bears the motto of the order "Let him be dishonoured who thinks ill of it" in letters of gold, or sometimes in diamonds. When the sovereign is a woman, as we have today, it is worn on the left arm above the elbow.

So, Brethren, we have our badge of white for purity, of lamb's skin for innocence; more ancient than the Golden Fleece, which was founded in 1429, and the Roman Eagle, which was instituted in 1701; and more honorable than the Garter 1343, which is the highest order of knighthood in the world. Always remember brethren that if you never disgrace that badge it will never disgrace you.

Brethren thank you for your time,

R.W. Bro. John K. Johnston