

The Tyler: Guardian of the Threshold

Masonic Education for Inner Quest Lodge #456

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By Tony Borum, AKA Tony the Tyler

Etymology and Operative Origins

The title "Tiler" (alternatively spelled "Tyler") finds its roots in the Latin word *tegere*, meaning "to cover" or "to roof." In operative masonry, a tiler was a workman who fastened tiles onto a building to enclose it and protect its interior from the elements. In Speculative Masonry, this role is transformed: the Tiler is the officer who "closes the building in," shielding the lodge's interior from the view and intrusion of the uninitiated.

The Outer Guard

The Tiler serves as the outer guard of the lodge. His primary duty is to permit none to pass the threshold unless they are duly qualified and have the permission of the Worshipful Master. Because a lodge may be opened in any of the three degrees, it is a necessary that a Tiler must be a Master Mason to legally discharge these functions.

Beyond security, the Tiler manages the practical logistics of the meeting. He prepares the lodge room, arranges the furniture, ensures candidates are prepared, and confirms that all brethren have registered their names before entering. As he is often compensated for these services, he is traditionally viewed as a servant of the lodge, yet he holds an office as essential as the Master or Wardens.

Historical and Symbolic Regalia

In the 18th century, the Tiler was a highly visible figure. The Grand Lodge Tiler of 1736 wore a colorful uniform: a red waistcoat under a dark blue coat trimmed with gold lace, yellow trousers, and a large triangular hat. He wore this even in public when delivering summonses.

The "proper implement" of the Tiler's office is the sword. Historically, this was a wavy, snake-shaped blade designed to remind Masons of the "Fiery Sword" that guarded the Garden of Eden. Because a wavy blade could not easily be sheathed, it remained drawn—a symbol of constant vigilance. Today, the Tiler uses an unsheathed sword to symbolically ward off "cowans and eavesdroppers" and to protect the Book of Constitutions from unauthorized alteration.

The Tiled Lodge

A lodge is considered "tiled" when the Tiler is at his post and the necessary security precautions are in place. While rituals state that three or more compose a lodge of Master Masons, the presence of a Tiler is a ritualistic necessity; a meeting cannot legally occur without a Tiler to guard the sanctum. Depending on the jurisdiction, the Tiler may "tyle from within" (with the door ajar) to participate in business, or remain strictly outside the closed door. Late-arriving brethren use the traditional "Tyler's Knock" to signal the Inner Guard, who then consults the Tiler to verify the visitor's qualifications.

Inner Vigilance

Symbolically, the Tiler represents the need for every Mason to guard their own inner self. Just as the Tiler wards off intruders, the individual Mason must set a guard over his thoughts, a watch at his lips, and a sentinel over his actions. By keeping out unworthy passions, he ensures that only virtuous intentions enter the "lodge" of his heart. The Tiler stands as the vital boundary between the profane world and the sacred space, ensuring the privacy necessary for the work of building a better man.

XI The necessity that every lodge, when congregated, should be duly tyled

3..."should be" tiled in our landmarks

Which officers are allowed to leave or enter a lodge during balloting?

Only 2...JD and Tyer...the master is not allowed to leave.