

## **A Brief History of Cryptic Council Masonry in the State of Illinois**

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Cryptic Council Masonry, known for its Royal Select Masters Degree, has a rich history that intertwines with the broader narrative of Freemasonry in the United States and specifically within the state of Illinois. Emerging from the traditions of the Craft Lodge, Cryptic Masonry offers deeper moral and philosophical teachings through its unique rituals and allegories.

### **Early Beginnings**

The roots of Cryptic Masonry in Illinois can be traced back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The development of Cryptic Councils in the United States stemmed from the desire to create additional degrees that would complement the Blue Lodge degrees. The first known Cryptic Council was established in 1813 in Massachusetts, and from there, the concept quickly spread across the country.

In Illinois, the growth of Cryptic Masonry began to take shape around 1860, when Masonic enthusiasts recognized the need for a more advanced degree that could continue to foster the principles of brotherly love, relief, and truth among Master Masons. The Illinois Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters (originally named the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Illinois) was established on February 15, 1870, formalizing the structure and governance of Cryptic Masonry in the state.

### **Formation and Expansion**

The Illinois Grand Council was established to oversee the Cryptic Councils that were formed throughout the state. Masons who had attained the Master Mason degree were invited to join these councils, allowing them to partake in the ceremonies and teachings of the Royal Select Masters Degree.

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, more Cryptic Councils were chartered, and existing councils began to flourish. The degree's emphasis on moral lessons and its connection to biblical narratives appealed to many Masons, which contributed to an increase in membership. The councils hosted various events, rituals, and educational activities designed to elevate the moral and civic responsibility of their members.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cryptic Masonry in Illinois continued to grow, adapting to changes in society and the needs of its members. The Illinois Grand Council has played a pivotal role in maintaining the tradition and standards of the Royal Select Masters

Degree, organizing annual gatherings and special events to foster camaraderie among members.

In recent years, Cryptic Councils in Illinois have embraced initiatives aimed at community outreach, charitable contributions, and the cultivation of leadership qualities among Masons. As a result, the Royal Select Masters Degree remains a vital part of the Masonic framework in the state, providing both personal enrichment and contributing to the greater good of society.

### **Conclusion**

Today, Cryptic Council Masonry in Illinois stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Freemasonry and the continuous quest for knowledge and virtue among its members. The Royal Select Masters Degree, enriched by its historical roots and ongoing evolution, continues to inspire Masons in Illinois to seek personal growth, deepen their understanding of moral principles, and nurture a spirit of brotherhood and community service. As it looks to the future, Cryptic Masonry remains a pivotal part of the Masonic experience, encouraging fellowship and lifelong learning among its members across the state.