

Tales of the Secret Vault

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Gary B. Strout,
Most Illustrious
Grand Master

2025-2026

From the Illustrious Grand Master

Most Illustrious Companion Gary Benjamin Strout, Grand Master

The Most Illustrious Grand Master has written the final article for this year.



Companions, as I bring my year of service to a close, I have found myself reflecting on the meaning of the titles we bear in our beloved Order. When we meet, we meet as Royal and Select Masters, and those words carry with them both instruction and obligation. They are not empty titles from a distant past. They are living titles, rich with symbolism, and they tell us something important about who we are and what the Council is meant to preserve.

The title Royal Master reminds us of the exalted nature of the truths entrusted to us. In the degree of Royal Master, we are taught lessons of faithfulness, patience, and trust in the unfolding purposes of God.

We learn that there is a divine order to all things and that some treasures are revealed only in their proper season. The word *Royal* points us to the dignity and sacredness of the work. It reminds us that the labor of a Cryptic Mason is connected to holy things, to sacred trust, and to those eternal truths that are never truly lost, even when hidden for a time.

The title of Select Master carries an equally profound meaning. To be select is to be chosen, but chosen what are we chosen for? We are chosen for service and for our fidelity. We are chosen to preserve that which is precious. In the Select Master's degree, we see the careful preparation of the secret vault and the deliberate safeguarding of that which must be hidden until the appointed time. This is one of the great teachings of Cryptic Masonry. Truth is not hidden because it lacks value, but because its value is so great that it must be protected. Thus, as Select Masters, we are the ones entrusted with sacred custody of that precious knowledge.

Together, these two titles form a complete picture of the Cryptic Mason. A Royal and Select Master is one who understands both the sacredness of the treasure and the solemn duty of its preservation. We are royal because the truths we serve are noble, divine, and enduring. We have been chosen to guard them with reverence and care. In this way, the Council fills that precious space in York Rite Masonry between loss and recovery. The ritual of the Council teaches us not only that the treasure was eventually found, but also why, how, and by whom it was preserved. That is why these titles matter. They describe not just our ritual, but our identity.

As I conclude this term, I would encourage every Companion to reflect upon these names more deeply. To be a Royal and Select Master is to be more than a member of this body. It is to be a guardian of the hidden things of Masonry. It is to understand that silence can be holy, that patience can be a virtue, and that what is most sacred is often entrusted only to faithful hands.

In closing, I would ask all of you to petition the grace of the GAOTU on our incoming MIGM and his team of officers for the coming year. Serving this wonderful craft has been a high honor, and I look forward to serving as your Grand High Priest.

Gary B. Strout

2026 Grand York Rite Sessions

The session will start on Thursday, August 31, 2026, at 8:00 AM with the conferral of the Order of the High Priesthood which will be followed by at 10:00 AM by the conferral of the Order of the Silver Trowel. Lunch will be served at 12:00 PM and after lunch, at 1:00 PM, the Kansas Association of Past Commanders will induct new members into the Association. The meeting of Kansas College No. 125 of the York Rite College will be held at 3:00 PM and Ashmole Court No. 17 of the Masonic Order of Athelstan will meet at 4:00 PM. The Past Grand Presiding Officers Association will have their annual meeting at 5:00 PM and will be followed by dinner at 6:00 PM. At 7:00 PM, all will gather to commemorate the lives of those who have passed to the celestial lodge above at the necrology service.



On Friday, May 1, registration starts at 7:30 AM and the 160th Grand Convocation of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons will have a public session at 8:00 AM which will be followed by the tiled session at 9:00 AM. Installation for the 2026-2027 Grand Chapter Officers will be held at 11:00 AM with lunch to follow at 12:30 PM.

The Most Illustrious Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Kansas will host their 159th Grand Assembly with a public session at 1:30 PM which will be followed by the tiled session at 2:30 PM. Installation for the 2026-2027 Grand Council Officers will be held at 4:30 PM. The Perpetual Life Committee will have their annual meeting at 6:00 PM, and the annual awards banquet will follow at 7:00 PM.

Saturday, May 2, will be the final day of activities for the 2026 Grand York Rite sessions and will start with a breakfast for the Past Grand Commander's wives at 6:30 AM and the Knights of the York Cross of Honor will have its annual meeting to elect worthy candidates at their 6:30 AM breakfast meeting. Registration will open at 7:30 AM and the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Kansas will reconvene its 158th Grand Conclave at 8:00 AM with a public opening session and the tiled meeting will start at 9:00 AM. Installation of the 2026-2027 Grand Commandery Officers will be held at 11:00 AM.

All members are invited to attend. Dais officers of the constituent Chapter, Council, and Commandery are highly encouraged to attend and vote on the business held at the sessions.

To register, or for more information, visit www.kansasyorkrite.org.