

Tales of the Secret Vault

A Monthly Publication of the Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Kansas



From the Captain of the Guard

Illustrious Companion Kelly J Long, Grand Captain of the Guard

The Most Illustrious Grand Master has asked the current Grand Council Officers to write articles each month for this supplement.



Great Smokies Assembly of YR Masons

This past July, I had the wonderful opportunity of attending the Great Smokies Summer Assembly of York Rite Masons, held every July in Maggie Valley, N.C. This was my second year attending this assembly, and it will not be the last. If you are wondering what this is all about, it is very similar to the South Central York Rite Conference, usually held in September of each year, specifically for the York Rites of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. If you still don't know what that is, you really need to plan on attending at least the South Central Conference. It will be held in Little Rock, AR, this year.

Maggie Valley is a wonderful little forested vacation town nestled in North Carolina's stunning Great Smoky Mountains and is not far from the Blue Ridge Parkway. It is known for its unrivaled location and friendly, small-town character, where you will discover the true meaning of Southern hospitality. The town is filled with unique shops, restaurants, and great places to stay. We arrived early enough on Sunday afternoon to enjoy the group cookout and admire the elk in the grassy lot behind the pavilion where we were holding the cookout.

The Summer Assembly basically has four purposes. The first is the same as all such conferences, it provides a wonderful offline opportunity to meet, greet, eat and socialize about everything that has happened over the previous year, as well as to make plans for the coming year. Not to mention there is a room somewhere with several bottles to sample, and snacks to savor while visiting with each other.

Secondly, the Assembly provides an excellent forum for exchanging ideas and sharing successes. This year we had the opportunity to hear from several very special guest speakers. At the Monday session this included M:W: Steven M. Norris, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, AF&AM, M:W: Mark A. Bradley, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Georgia, F&AM, and Mark A. Bradley, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, AF&AM, SGIG for North Carolina & the Illustrious Grand Chaplin Supreme Grand Council of the A&ASR, S.J. Then at the Tuesday session, we heard from H. Bart Henderson, Past Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Texas, AF&AM, and Most Eminent Grand Master General, Convent General Knights of the York Cross of Honour. It is rare that so many influential speakers gather in one location.

September, 2026

Wayne D. Drake

Most Illustrious
Grand Master

2026-2027

Thirdly, this is the Assembly where the aims and concerns of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International, the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons International, and the Grand Encampment,



Knights Templar of the U.S.A. are heard and discussed. This year, with the Triennial coming up in August, we heard from the candidates running for the dais officer positions for the General Grand Chapter and Council. This included our very own R.W.: Patrick Carr, running strong for the office of General Grand Scribe of the General Grand Chapter of RAM, Int. RW Bro. Patrick did not speak long, but his was a powerful speech showing just where he stands. The response of the membership was strong and positive.

Fourth, last but not least, the Assembly always makes a trip up to the Masonic Marker, a gem of a North Carolina Masonic Shrine, which is located at an altitude of 4,522 feet at Black Camp Gap in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It is just a few yards from the famous Blue Ridge Parkway. This special



A current photo from July, 2025.



This is stone #122. Catalog description: "White marble inscribed "Gd. Comdy. Kansas" from R.E. Dwight M. Numbers, Grand Commander K. T., Kansas."

visit takes place on Monday afternoon, rain or shine. This year was definitely rain! While at the Masonic Marker we were favored with a talk from Dr. E. Oscar Alleyne, PM, Wappingers Lodge No. 671, Deputy Grand Master, Grand Lodge of New York F&AM, Senior Grand Warden, Grand Council Allied Masonic Degrees, USA.

The Masonic marker or memorial at Black Camp Gap stands 12-feet tall and is 9-feet square at its base. Its three concrete tiers are covered with at least 687 stones and minerals. The pieces include stones from Plymouth Rock, Pike's Peak, a brick from the White House given by Franklin D. Roosevelt, a piece of an Egyptian pyramid and the Alamo. Sizes range from a few ounces to a 170-pound stone from an outpost in Cuba built by Hernando de Soto in the 1500s and were thoroughly cataloged at the time of construction in 1938. (If anyone is interested, I can forward a copy of the catalog as originally printed.) The front faces east and its middle tier is dominated by a large triangle with one of the primary inscriptions. On the lower east side tier are two smaller triangles with inscriptions.

All York Rite members, Chapter, Council and Commandery, are welcome to attend this Assembly. If you are interested in meeting the movers and shakers of the York Rite, this is one of the best places to do just that. If you want to be involved, this Assembly is a must! And while you are considering it, attend the South Central York Rite Conference in Little Rock this year, too.



This is stone #121. Catalog description: "Polished stone of a peculiar deposit recently discovered on the scenic drive of Kansas, inscribed "Kansas," from M.:I.: Roy H. Clossen, P.G.M. and M.:I.: Neil M. McLeod, Grand Master of Grand Council of Kansas."

Kelly J. Long

GGCCMI Triennial Session

The Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Kansas was well represented at the 2026 General Grand Council Cryptic Masons International Session which was held in Washington, DC, on Tuesday, September 1, 2026.



Kansas was represented by Most Illustrious Companions Wayne D. Drake, Gary B. Strout, L. Kent Needham, and Gary A. Mason, Right Illustrious Companion Patrick C. Carr, and Illustrious Companions Andrew G. Mosley, Justin D. Crippen, and Kelly J. Long. It was a good time of meetings and fellowship.

On Tuesday, the General Grand Council opened and the business of the body was completed before elections were held for several offices. Right Puissant Companion Keith Powell of Louisiana, the sitting Right Puissant Deputy General Grand Master, was elected

and installed as the new Most Puissant General Grand Master for this Triennial.

The new Right Puissant Deputy General Grand Master is Companion Mark Irwin, and the Right Puissant General Grand Principal Conductor of the Work will be Companion Sean McNorton. This Triennial saw the election of a new General Grand Recorder since Right Puissant Companion Irwin was elected to serve in another office. The delegates elected Right Puissant Kevin B. Sample from the Grand Council of Missouri to fill that office.

The new General Grand Council Ambassador for Kansas will be announced soon. With the changing of a new Triennial term, a new Regional Deputy General Grand Master for the South Central Region had to be appointed. Congratulations to Right Puissant Companion and Doctor Paul L. Daniels of the Grand Council of Missouri on his appointment and installation.

Congratulations to all who were either elected or appointed to serve the General Grand Council for this new Triennial term of office.

Pike's Peak Cryptic Deposit Inspection for 2026

The annual Pike's Peak Cryptic Deposit Inspection pilgrimage has been rescheduled for September 25-27, 2026, in Manitou Springs, Colorado. It is our duty as Cryptic Masons in Kansas to make this annual trip to inspect the deposit which was originally placed in 1899, before it was opened and replaced in 1999.

The host hotel will continue to be the Silver Saddle Motel in Manitou Springs. The rooms are affordable and clean, but you will need to make your own reservations.

The pilgrimage will start on Friday evening at 6:45 PM at the Edelweiss German Restaurant for our traditional evening meal. After a good night's sleep, the journey to ascend Pike's Peak begins at 8:30 AM at the Cog Railway. The 9:20 AM train has been chosen for the departure. Please make your reservations in advance for the train ride up the mountain.



Arriving at the top of the mountain, the group will have approximately 50 minutes to visit the deposit, inspect it and make any repairs needed, and return to the platform to descend from the top of the mountain on the Cog Railway.

Once the ride down from Pike's Peak is completed, the group will return to the Motel and meet in the parking lot at 1:00 PM to drive to Canon City to take the 3:30 PM Royal Gorge Railway dinner excursion. You must reserve and pay for your tickets prior to your arrival in Canon City. The train will have dinner available for an additional price and you may select from the menu and pay at the location.

The pilgrimage officially comes to an end when the Royal Gorge portion of the trip is completed. Everyone will depart on Sunday morning to return to Kansas with the knowledge of a successful pilgrimage and inspection of the deposit until the 2027 trip is planned.