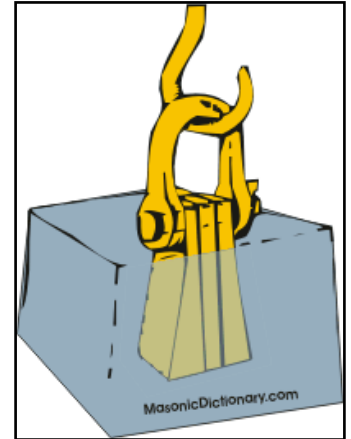


Are you a Lewis?

What is a Lewis? Old English Tracing Boards of the Entered Apprentice degree illustrate the Lewis; a peculiar tool of Operative Masons. The instrument is made of a pair of dovetail wedges, provided with a hook or ring. When it was inserted in a hole in a large stone, the hook or ring spreads and locks the wedges securely in the stone so that it may be raised by derrick without putting a rope or chain around it. The heavier the stone, the more securely the Lewis locked into it. From this operative tool came the speculative tool as the Lewis became a symbol of strength in Old English rituals.

In Speculative Masonic language, the son of an English Mason is called a Lewis, but in our country the use of this term is not as well known in modern times. "Lewis" denotes the concept of a son following in the footsteps of his father and that upon the Lewis rests the strength and responsibilities of being a Lodge member and in providing support to the Lodge. In some traditions the responsibility of being a Lewis came with the privilege of being allowed to petition a Lodge at the age of eighteen instead of waiting until the age of twenty-one.

The son following the father was a very important concept to Operative Masons. The major reason for allowing 'a young man in his non-age' to become a Mason is tied to the third degree obligation in which we promise to help, aid, and assist the orphans of Master Masons. If a Master Mason died or became disabled, the assistance given the family by brother Master Masons often wasn't enough, so it was up to his oldest son to provide for the family.



The English term Lewis is also tied with the French word *Louveteau*, and while both are used by Speculative Masons in referring to their sons, the term of *Louveteau* brings with it a different connotation. The meaning of the word *Louveteau* is thought to be linked in part to the operative tool *Louve*, being the same as the operative tool Lewis. But the word *Louveteau* also carries the meaning of "young wolf" which might be best described from the following excerpt from the Short Talk Bulletin – February 1935, Masonic Service Organization of North America:

In France the son of a Freemason is called a Louveteau (daughter Louvetine) which may have been derived from "louffton" a word occasionally used in place of Lewis in the seventeenth century; the French word for the operative instrument is "Louve." Here a curious verbal bypath invites the student; Louveteau also means a young wolf. In the Egyptian Mysteries, the candidate, wearing a mask or covering simulating a wolf's head, was often called "wolf." Apparently the reason for the masking of a candidate as a wolf is found in the tenuous connection between the sun, which scatters the flocks of stars from the sky, and the wolf, which scatters the flocks of sheep and cattle. The sun was the central symbol of many ancient mystery religions. Similarly, the Greek "Lukos" is both the sun and a wolf. Albert Pike said that a Louveteau might be received as such when twelve years of age, or over. According to this authority, any Symbolic Lodge might receive any Louveteau by a special ceremony, which while it did not especially obligate the Lodge to support or educate him, did promise that the Lodge would watch over him, protect him, give him counsel and advice. In his book, Offices of Masonic Baptism, Reception of a Louveteau and Adoption, Pike states: "It (the ceremony of reception) entitles the Louveteau to be received an Apprentice at the age of twenty-one years, if he be found worthy and intelligent."

This reference indicates that the use of the word *Louveteau* was not as obscure in America's past as one might think, as Albert Pike used the term in a sixty-page treatise entitled "Reception of a *Louveteau*", in which he hailed the virtues and responsibilities of the *Louveteau* upon the candidate and the Lodge.

The terms and coincidences of history and Freemasonry are as apparent here with Lewis as in so many other areas of Freemasonry. It is hoped that many of you will further the research of this curious application in the English and French traditions. Regardless of the derivation, it is apparent that the pride of having a son follow his father is a respected tradition in our Fraternity.

Thank you to Steve Bell of Sikeston Lodge #310 AF & AM for his contributions to this Masonic Minute.

Share your ideas with the Masonic Education Committee at moed4u@momason.org