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J. B. TRAYNE, F.D.D.G.M.,  
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## ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY IN AMERICA.

BY BRO. W. J. HUGHAN, TORQUAY, ENGLAND.

A great deal has been written as to the origin of Freemasonry in America, especially of late years, and much that has been published requires to be rewritten. Years ago, we could only raise superstructures on the facts then accumulated. Now, the researches of Masonic students in Great Britain and America enables us to go down deeper and wider with our foundations, and hence to strengthen the historical edifice, as well as to rebuild some portions in a more accurate manner.

The pages of the *Keystone*, editorially and otherwise, teem with facts on the subject; so also do the *Freemason* and *Freemason's Chronicle* (of England), and many other well-known publications. Then again, there have been several works recently issued which deal with the question, by Brothers Lane, Meyer, and other investigators, especially the historian Gould; also articles and pamphlets by Brothers Woodford, Mackey, Nickerson, Sadler, Norton, Brennan, and numerous writers also well-known to the Craft. My present purpose is simply to submit a few facts well attested, that will be accepted by all competent critics, and there leave the matter for further evidence.

1. The first mention of meetings of Masonic Lodges in America is to be found in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for December 3rd, 1730;—"Several Lodges of Freemasons created in this province" (Pennsylvania).

2. The earliest Treasurer's Book of an American Lodge, so far discovered, is that of the "St. John's Lodge," Philadelphia, beginning on June 24th, 1731, and ending about the year 1737. The value of this Record is very great. *When and how* this Lodge was formed, no one can say, but that it was at work from (or before) 1731 cannot be doubted. The volume noted proves St. John's Lodge, Philadelphia, to be the premier of all Lodges in America, so far known, but its origin is still as uncertain as ever. It is not noted in any English list preserved; neither is any entry to be found in the Books and Registers of the Grand Lodge of England. In the *Voice of Masonry*, September, 1875, I noted my find of No. 79 [116] "Philadelphia," in the *Dublin Pocket Companion*, of 1735, and then fancied it may have been originally on the English Engraved Lists of 1731 2, though it was not in the Register of the Grand Lodge of England. Bro. John Lane has put an end to this fancy, at least so it seems to me. He and I felt assured that the Lodge was held at the "Castle in Highgate" London, as No. 79, did not get on the roll until the end of 1732; hence there must have been an earlier Lodge for that number, during 1731. We thought possibly that my original suggestion might turn out to be a fact. There was no fee paid for the first warrant, and the day of meeting agreed with