

ticing any industry or mystery, were required by law to form themselves into guilds or companies. Where, in any town, the weaker trades were unable to maintain sodalities for each, several of them united to form one guild, and, where very few were engaged in a calling, they sought admittance into one of the existing guilds, and were accepted on payment of certain fees or fines. On the one hand, the law made it incumbent upon them to be members of some guild, and, on the other hand, such membership was of great value to them. Only members of the guilds were permitted to carry on business in the cities, and many privileges and immunities were given them by the crown. They elected aldermen and municipal officers; in fact, they were the electors of the town in which they lived.

Thus, at the end of the fourteenth century—the date of the oldest existing Masonic documents—Masonry was:

1. A trade union or guild, differing in no essential from other trade guilds.

2. It had a charter from the crown, was under supervision by officers of the crown, and was governed by regulations partly framed by and satisfactory to the King's officials.

3. Its members, with those of other guilds, formed the electorate of the cities and towns, and chose the municipal officials.

4. Only members of the guilds were permitted to carry on business in the towns.

5. Men not masons by trade were accepted as members of the societies, so that there were Free Masons, or men who enjoyed the freedom of the towns by reason of having served as apprentices to the trade, and Accepted Masons, or men who became members on payment of certain fees, because they had no guilds of their own trade or calling.

The rules and regulations for the government of Masons differed in no important particular from those of the other guilds.

The apprentices were to serve faithfully for seven years; they were to be zealous in the interests of their