

# WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

## BOOK REVIEW

### The Master's Book

By: Carl H. Claudy

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In many ways, a man's Masonic journey seems to proceed along two parallel tracks. One track follows the intellectual and spiritual paths offered by Freemasonry. The other track follows the organizational rules and regulations that are necessary for the orderly transaction of business and the management of the administration of the Lodge. In recent years, American Freemasonry has taken on a decidedly mechanical approach, emphasizing the latter path at the expense of the former.

In *The Master's Book*, legendary Masonic writer Carl H. Claudy demonstrates that the two tracks are not mutually exclusive.

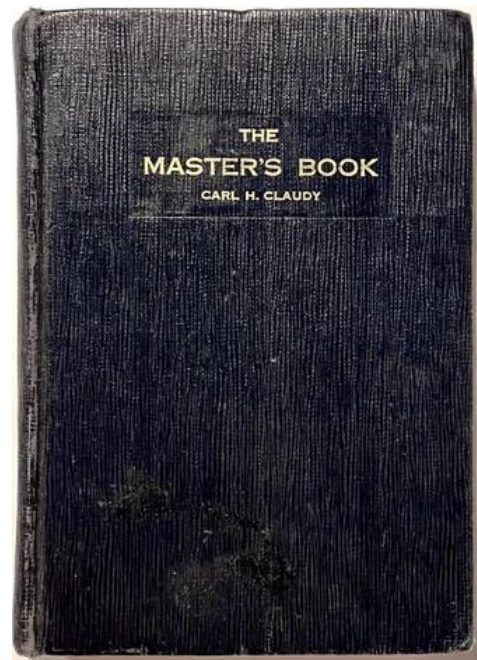
Carl H. Claudy (1879 – 1957) was one of American Freemasonry's most prolific and influential writers.

A native of the District of Columbia, he became a member of Washington, D. C.'s Harmony Lodge No. 17 in 1908. He served as Master of the Lodge in 1932, and in 1943 was installed as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. M. W. Brother Claudy was perhaps best known for his work as writer and editor of "The Short Talk Bulletin" distributed by the Masonic Service Association.

The author of numerous articles, plays and books about Freemasonry, most of which are still widely circulated, M. W. Brother Claudy used *The Master's Book* to provide incoming Lodge Masters with a roadmap to a successful term in office.

Brief, and to the point, *The Master's Book* consists of ten chapters, each of which address a specific aspect of the leadership required to successfully man the helm of a Masonic Lodge.

Fittingly, M. W. Claudy begins with a chapter called, "Preparing To Be Master." He encourages incoming Masters to use their time wisely to lay a proper foundation for the year in which they will occupy the Oriental Chair. He cites the necessity of becoming familiar with Masonic law and ritual as the cornerstones on which the Master's term will rest. Brother Claudy also directs his readers to spend time reviewing the annual proceedings of the Grand Lodge of their respective jurisdictions. He points out that a study of the proceedings gives the incoming Master a perspective not to be found elsewhere. This perspective allows him to evaluate the challenges that he will face in the year that he serves as Master of his Lodge in the context needed to make the decisions necessary to carry out the mission of the Lodge.



The second chapter is captioned, “Powers of A Master.” Here, Brother Claudy carefully distinguishes the powers inherent in the Master’s chair with those found in leadership positions in other organizations. While it is well recognized that there are but few limits on the powers of the Master of a Masonic Lodge, Brother Claudy presciently writes, “Power is constructive only when used with knowledge.” The knowledge to which Brother Claudy is referring is the knowledge of Freemasonry as a whole, and not merely its mechanical aspects.

Chapter three is titled, “Duties of A Master.” In this chapter, M. W. Claudy includes a discussion of how to motivate men to come to Lodge. While he concedes the allure of many things that may distract men from attendance at Lodge (activities such as movies, sports, concerts or dining out), he points out that there is one item available in Masonic Lodges that is unavailable anywhere else. That one thing is Freemasonry! Brother Claudy urges his readers to focus on the delivery of Freemasonry at Lodge meetings, and makes the convincing argument that the Master who does so will capture the interest of the members of his Lodge, thereby generating greater attendance.

The fourth chapter discusses Masonic law, and here Brother Claudy encourages his readers to not only be familiar with the Constitution of their various jurisdictions, but to also develop a working knowledge of Anderson’s Constitutions and the Old Charges. Again, this knowledge provides a foundation and a perspective that a Master will need in deciding questions of Masonic law within his Lodge.

M. W. Brother Claudy called the fifth chapter, “The Art of Presiding,” and he makes a forceful case that the act of presiding over a Masonic Lodge is, indeed, an art. A Master of a Lodge has something of a balancing act before him. He must be attentive and respectful to the officers and members of his Lodge, but, at the same time, must retain a firm control over the proceedings. Brother Claudy offers that the Master who is respectful to the institution of Freemasonry is likely to receive respect in return from his Brethren.

Chapter six is quaintly titled, “Entertainment and Attendance.” Here, Brother Claudy writes that if men feel that attendance at Lodge is entertaining, they are more apt to be regular in their presence. It is important to understand, however, that Brother Claudy uses the word “entertainment” in its broadest sense. Each of the examples of “entertainment” that he cites are what Masons of the 21<sup>st</sup> century would likely refer to as “education.” Brother Claudy writes, “But attendance, in itself, is of no value if nothing is given to those who attend.” He cites the incorporation of Masonic debates, the inclusion of outside speakers and the utilization of music as ways to capture the interest of members, promote attendance, and advance the aim and purpose of the Lodge.

In Chapter seven, “Set the Craft to Labor,” M. W. Brother Claudy discusses the importance of directing the labors of the Lodge, both inside and outside its walls. He encourages Masters to approach their duties with enthusiasm, with the result being that it will be met with a corresponding enthusiasm from the Lodge.

Chapter eight is titled, “Secretary, Wardens, Past Masters.” In this chapter, M. W. Brother Claudy discusses the relationship that the Master should have with each of these Brothers. Stressing the need for tact and diplomacy in developing relationships with these men, he points out the obvious advantages that a Master may realize from winning their support during the year he is in office. Brother Claudy also takes time to discuss the responsibility of the Master to use his term in office to mentor and develop the Wardens who may eventually succeed to the East.

The ninth chapter, “Lodge Finances,” is exactly what its title implies, and addresses the need for fiscal responsibility and accountability within the Lodge.

Chapter ten, the final chapter, is titled, “The Ideal.” In it, Brother Claudy writes:

“An ideal is the perfection towards which we stretch eager hands – but never grasp.

“The ideal Master has never presided in any East, for the ideal Master would be perfect and perfection is not given to human beings.

“But the clearer and more attractive is the ideal before us, the more strenuously we may strive towards it, and the nearer we may approach it.”

Brother Claudy’s point is simple. The ideal Master is a philosopher, a judge, a guide and a friend. While perfection is not to be found among men, and, therefore, not among Masters, it is no less the goal for which we should aim.

*The Master’s Book* offers sound instruction and imparts wisdom to those who would be Masters of their Lodge. It is as relevant today as it was when first published. M. W. Brother Carl H. Claudy left Freemasonry with a significant body of meaningful works. *The Master’s Book* is numbered among those works, and illustrates that the approach to leadership in Masonic Lodges both can, and should, incorporate the intellectual and spiritual qualities of Freemasonry along with the administrative skills needed to manage the organization.

*The Master’s Book*, originally published in 1935, remains available from online booksellers and Masonic supply companies.