

WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

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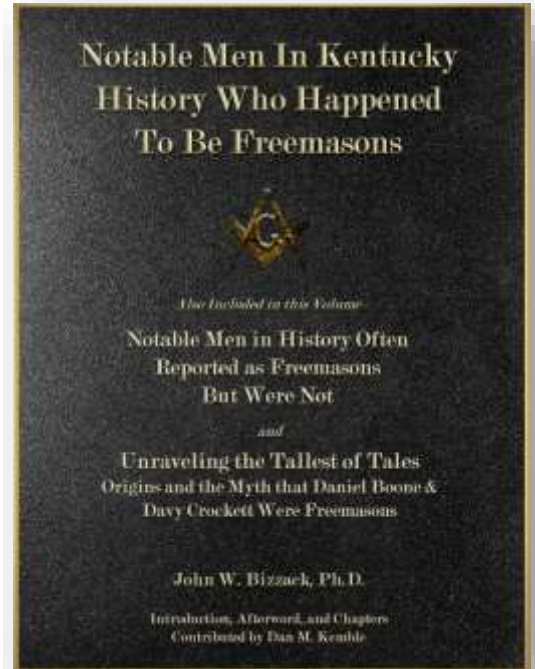
Notable Men in Kentucky History Who Happened to be Freemasons

by WB John W. Bizzack

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Freemasonry, and specifically Kentucky Freemasonry, is blessed to have yet another well-developed book by Masonic scholar Dr. John W. Bizzack. *Notable Men in Kentucky History Who Happened to be Freemasons* is Bro. Bizzack's twelfth book who, besides Freemasonry, also has written books and essays on leadership, criminal investigation, police standards, the behavior of organizations and their management. Bro. Bizzack is a forty-five-year veteran of the field of policing and criminal justice.

This book though is only partially about Freemasonry. Freemasonry is the binding to the story line rather than the total substance. *Notable Men in Kentucky History Who Happened to be Freemasons* is divided into three separate parts, each with a distinct thesis and direction. Part One detailed the stories of twenty-six men from, or who immigrated to, Kentucky generally during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Part Two explain how some men, specifically the five discussed, were thought to be Freemasons when little to no proof of their membership was discovered. Part Three analyzed the evidence at hand disproving the myth that Daniel Boone and David Crockett were ever Freemasons. The combined purpose of the book was in "introduce you to some of the colorful and significant men who shaped the fabric of the Commonwealth from its early years of discovery through the end of the 19th century."



Each section of the book is governed by the principle of rigid academic investigation of the evidence rather than relying on hearsay testimony. In the Forward, Dan Kemble, William O. Ware Lodge of Research Past Master, explained that “historians of Freemasonry have not always been meticulous in researching the claims that specific individuals were Freemasons. Too often, the writers of Masonic history have relied on hearsay, faulty recollections, and unsubstantiated assertions in promoting legendary tales of membership in the Masonic Fraternity by some of history’s greatest men.” Many past writers have collected information regarding lists of famous Masons based on lore and legend. Legends are said to be folklore that consists of a narrative featuring human actions perceived or believed both by teller and listeners to have taken place within human history. Narratives in this genre may demonstrate human values and possess certain qualities that give the tale life. Legends have a place in Freemasonry and teach core values of the craft. Legends, though, do not have a place in the exploration of evidence regarding the factual history of the craft and its members.

Bizzack’s approach to history is one based upon the due trial and strict examination of evidence. He adapted our Masonic examination of a man’s membership to the craft to that of primary and secondary sources regarding the departed and their possible affiliation to the craft. Bizzack explained that this process is all too often not followed by Masonic writers in reference to lists of “Famous Masons.” Instead, other writers have been “rooted in faulty sources and information.” This wishful thinking mindset only diminishes the value of the craft by subpar research. Bizzack stated that blindly accepting the information on Famous Mason’s lists makes us look “naïve, gullible, and under-informed.”

Bizzack has followed the rigid academic investigation of evidence. He has kept to the standards set forth by other researchers, such as Anthony Brundage, author of *Going to the Sources: A Guild to Historical Research and Writing*. Brundage described how the writing of these histories requires satisfying the same demanding criteria regarding the evaluation of sources, the marshaling of evidence, and the deployment of literary skill upon which all histories rely. This takes a blend of diligence, skepticism, imagination, judiciousness, and humor that pays big dividends to historians in any field. Bizzack cited each of his sources in hundreds of footnotes, adequately defending his work.

The entries about the individuals are encyclopedic in nature, briefly describing the importance of the individual and then highlighting any pertinent Masonic information. These entries vary in nature due to the circumstances of each individual. These men include famous names, such as the statesmen Henry Clay, the explorer Kit Carson, and the Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan. Other lesser known men, such as the formerly enslaved Josiah Henson are included. Henson’s section was short as the information was limited. Bizzack stated that Henson’s name was synonymous with the Uncle Tom character in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Although Henson was

born in Maryland, he was sold several times and eventually sold to a farm in Lewisport, Kentucky. Henson eventually escaped to Canada on October 28, 1829. Bizzack located a 2003 Proceedings of the Grand Historian Report from the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario which stated that Henson was made a Mason in Boston during his travels north. Upon reaching Canada, Henson joined Mount Moriah Lodge No.11 and became the secretary in 1866. This is an example of the type of entry included for all of the listed men.

Part three diverges from the entries of the previous two sections as it analyzes the myth behind the legend that Daniel Boone and David Crockett were Masons. This section includes an overview of the men's lives, the facts that are known about their affiliation, how the myths were created, and a conclusion statement. As an example, a large portion concerning David Crockett was related to a Masonic apron claimed to be his. Bizzack included photographs of the Tennessee Centennial celebration program book, souvenir book, map of the event, and newspaper article where the apron was placed on display in 1897. The apron was on loan to the Tennessee Historical Society from E. M. Taylor of Paducah, Kentucky. Through newspapers, Texas Grand Lodge documents, phone conversations with Masonic historians, government documents (death records, census data, etc.), and several books, Bizzack pieced together the puzzle of this apron to create a fascinating conclusion.

Notable Men in Kentucky History Who Happened to be Freemasons is a representation of an in-depth investigation to confirm or override previous historical analysis of men claimed to be Freemasons. Bizzack used his lengthy law enforcement experience to analyze the claims in previous historical work in a methodical manner. This work is truly a fascinating read for the layman or Mason as it isn't specifically Masonic in composure.

Notable Men in Kentucky History Who Happened to be Freemasons is available through thecraftsman.org and other online booksellers.

Reviewed by

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