

Grace  
Dee May

MUSEUM &  
LIBRARY

# ILLUMINATIONS

MAY / JUNE 2026



THE  
TEST  
OF  
STEEL

## MASONIC BUFFOONERY

In Print, on Stage, and on Screen



Grace Dee May Museum & Library • 665 W Jefferson Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90007 • [www.gracedeemay.org](http://www.gracedeemay.org)

ILLUMINATING THE LEGACY OF THE WEST

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In 2004, Audrey Marie Stein established the Grace Dee May Museum. Audrey believed that she had been richly blessed by the **Grace** of God. Audrey's nickname was **Dee** and she had been born in the month of **May**. So, as Director of the Foundation, she named the Museum the **Grace Dee May**.



**"Humor is mankind's greatest blessing."**

– Samuel Clemens, Humorist & Freemason

## Freemason Frivolity

Most of us would agree that springtime brings a spirit of lightness after the dark and dreary days of winter. So, in this May-June issue of *Illuminations* – we hope you'll enjoy a bit of "Freemason frivolity" as we present an array of humorous spoofs of our ancient and honorable fraternity.

The Masonic ideals and principles have uplifted the lives of our Brethren for generations. Certainly, the solemnity of ritual in our lodges reflect the importance and impact of morality, purpose, and commitment. However, as our Brother Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain) reminded us – it is good to be able to laugh at ourselves.

All of us are familiar with the old adage, "Laughter is the best medicine." Recently, a study from the prestigious Mayo Clinic has stated that a sense of humor relieves stress and improves overall health and happiness.

Did you know that the renowned Mayo Clinic was co-founded by a remarkable Masonic family? Dr. William Worrall Mayo resettled his family to Minnesota in 1863 where he joined Rochester Masonic Lodge No. 21. Mayo's medical practice was a joint venture with his two physician sons, William James and Charles Horace Mayo. The practice grew so rapidly that at one point, the Mayo physicians utilized the first floor offices of the Masonic building to provide medical care to patients.

In 2022, the Scottish Rite Museum & Library proudly inducted William Worrall Mayo, William James Mayo (member of Rochester Lodge No. 21) and Charles H. Mayo (member of Halcyon Chapter No. 9, Royal Arch Masons and Home Commandery No. 5 Knights Templar, and a 33° Scottish Rite Mason) into the Masonic Hall of Fame.

On this prestigious legacy of the Mayo family, I will lightheartedly end with a joke,

**"How many Freemasons does it take to change a light bulb?"**

The answer is –

**"I'd like to tell you but I'm sworn to secrecy."**

Fraternally,  
Sean Foran  
Curator and Board President



# The Myth of "Riding the Goat"

## When Father Rode The Goat

– Anonymous

The house is full of arnica  
And mystery profound;  
We do not dare to run about  
Or make the slightest sound;  
We leave the big piano shut  
And do not strike a note;  
The doctor's been here seven times  
Since father rode the goat.  
He joined the lodge a week ago –  
Got in at 4 a.m.  
And sixteen brethren brought him home  
Though he says he brought them.  
His wrist was sprained and one big rip,  
Had rent his Sunday coat –  
There must have been a lively time  
When father rode the goat.  
He's resting on the couch to-day!  
And practicing his signs –  
The hailing signal, working grip, And other  
monkeyshines;  
He mutters passwords 'neath his breath,  
And other things he'll quote –  
They surely had an evening's work  
When father rode the goat.  
He has a gorgeous uniform,  
All gold and red and blue;  
A bat with plunges and yellow braid,  
And golden badges too.  
But, somehow, when we mention it,  
He wears a look so grim  
We wonder if he rode the goat  
Or if the goat rode him.



## "Riding the Goat"

This humorous expression is widely associated with initiations of fraternal organizations including Woodmen, Maccabees, Orangemen, Odd Fellows, Forresters, Knights of Pythias, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, Moose, Elks – but there's no such thing as "the Loyal Order of Goats".

The expression, "Riding the Goat" has been used for centuries but gained momentum in 1827 with the founding of the "Anti-Masonic Party".

Because all fraternal organizations utilize some secret signs and symbols, conspiracy theories abound over what might take place behind the closed doors of a lodge. The reference to a goat stems from the animal's cloven hooves which superstition links to the work of a devil.

In 1871, a humorous story *Free Masonry Exposed* featured a plot with a wife demanding to know what went on at her husband's lodge. The husband pretends to divulge the secret rituals including a wild scenario of riding on a goat during the "Fellow-Calf degree." The popularity of this fictional story certainly rekindled the wild and wacky myth of "riding the goat".



## Cassius Marcellus Coolidge (1844–1934)

Bro. Coolidge was the creator of the popular paintings depicting dogs playing poker. He was an active Freemason in the Masonic lodge in Antwerp, NY. His painting "Riding the Goat," is of particular interest to members of the Craft as it depicts dogs taking on the roles of lodge members and the canine candidate humorously astride a goat.



# Poking Fun at Freemasons



*The Mystery of Masonry Brought to Light by the Gormagons* by William Hogarth

**William Hogarth** (1697-1764)

Hogarth was initiated as a Freemason in the Lodge at the Hand and Apple Tree Tavern, and was later a member of the Carrier Stone Lodge and the Grand Stewards' Lodge.



**James Gillray** (1756-1815)

Gillray was a talented British caricaturist known as the "father of modern political caricature."



**Bobby Bumps Starts a Lodge** (1914)

This vintage animated cartoon pokes fun at a candidate wearing an apron and is initiated by being butted by a goat. This short film was created by American animator Earl Hurd.



**Sons of the Desert** (1933)

A Laurel and Hardy classic comedy featuring Stan and Ollie as pseudo-Shriners. Oliver Hardy was an active member of Al Malaikah Shrine in Los Angeles.



**Churchill in his Masonic apron and Stalin with a bomb**

This poster was a political spoof of leaders during World War II.



## Laughing it up



### Bud Fisher (1885-1954)

The creator of the comic strip *Mutt and Jeff* also wrote and directed a black and white silent cartoon short released in 1922 titled *Riding the Goat*.

Bro. Fisher was a Mason in Los Angeles and his father Albert was active in the Brooklyn Masonic Veterans' Association.



### Fred Flintstone

Animators Hanna and Barbera had both Fred and Barney as members of the *Loyal Order of Water Buffalo*

### Homer Simpson

Matt Groening's Homer was a member of *Stonecutters Lodge*

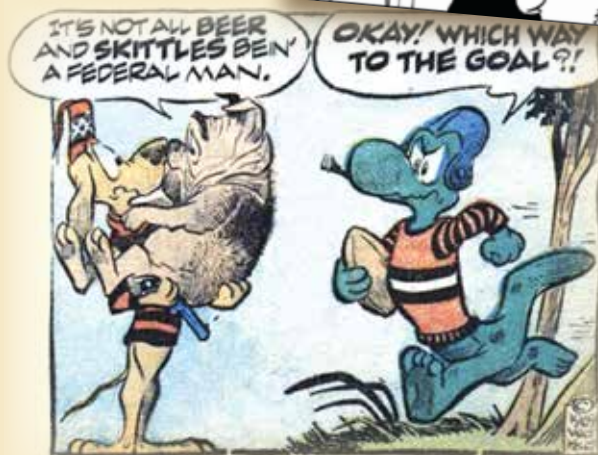
### Harold Gray (1894-1968)

The cartoonist who penned *Little Orphan Annie* was a charter member of *Lombard Lodge No. 1098*, in Illinois.



### Spongebob

Stephen Hillenburg's characters met at the underwater *Cephalopod Lodge*.



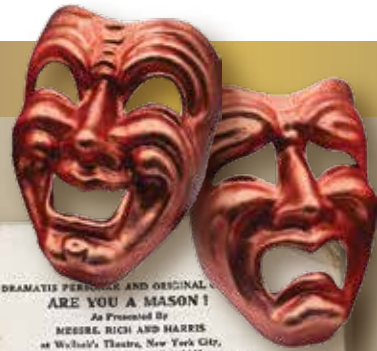
### Walt Kelly (1913-1973)

Kelly created this Masonic-themed *Pogo* cartoon in 1969.



DC Comics *Superman Adventures* "Fighting Fate" August 1999.

# On stage: Are you a Mason?



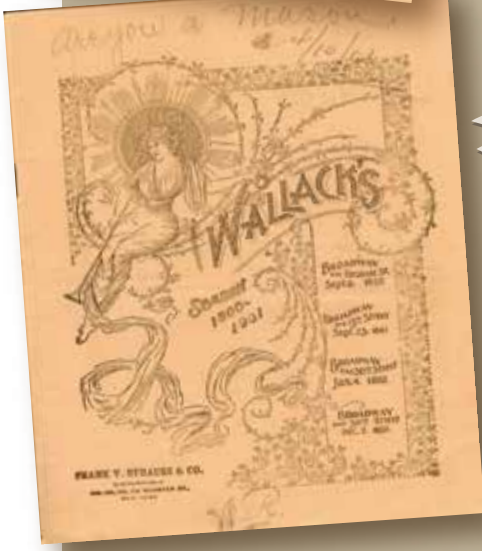
**Cecil B. DeMille (1881-1959)**  
 Before gaining fame and fortune as a film director, C.B. DeMille was cast in *Are You a Mason?* in its debut on Broadway. Bro. DeMille was a member of Prince of Orange Masonic Lodge No. 16, New York City.

## *Are You a Mason?*

This three-act comedic play was adapted by Leo Ditrichstein, from a German play, *Die Logenbrüder* (The Freemason), by Curt Kraatz and Carl Laufs. This play was originally performed at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London in 1901. Other venues included Kelly's Theatre, Liverpool and Wallack's Theatre in New York City. Amateur productions of *Are You a Mason?* spread through many American cities. This 1901 playbook noting Cecil B. DeMille as a cast member is part of the GDM Museum collection.



**MILLIONS LOVED IT AS A STAGE PLAY!**  
 -Victoria Daily Times (Victoria, B.C.)  
 November 18, 1935



# On screen: *Are you a Mason?*



## **Are You a Mason?**

This American silent film produced by Adolph Zukor (Famous Players Film Company) was distributed through Paramount Pictures. The film's director was Thomas N. Heffron. Bro. Zukor was a 50-year Freemason. He was a member of Centennial Masonic Lodge No. 763, New York City.



## **John Barrymore (1882-1942)**

Barrymore starred in the 1915 silent film *Are You a Mason?* – portraying a young husband who longs to have an occasional night out with the boys. His suspicious wife is skeptical that he has joined a Masonic Lodge. Deception is counterbalanced with comedic plot twists and turns.

Sadly, the 1915 film is considered to be lost. All that remains is the script and a few still images.



**BARRYMORE AT HIS BEST!**  
 – Glasgow Courier,  
 August 27, 1915



**Let us bring some humor and history to your organization.**

Invite the Grace Dee May museum to entertain and enlighten your guests at your meeting or special event. **Contact Sean Foran at 818-620-2058** or email: [info@gracedeemay.org](mailto:info@gracedeemay.org) to find out more about our live theatrical performances, guest speakers, films, and multi-media presentations.

**Sean Foran, BOARD PRESIDENT AND CURATOR**  
 818-620-2058 / [info@gracedeemay.org](mailto:info@gracedeemay.org)  
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**MUSEUM**

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665 W. Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007

**Our Vision:**

The Grace Dee May Museum will seek to present a thematic look at the American West by utilizing its extensive collection of Western Art, and incorporate California history to broaden and deepen the public knowledge and appreciation of the men and women that settled the western part of the United States.

**Our Mission:**

The Grace Dee May Museum is committed to advancing the public knowledge and understanding of the American West and the contributions that Freemasonry has played in its development.

Grace Dee May Inc.  
 (EIN: 03-0591428)  
 is a qualified tax exempt entity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code