

**THE GRAND LODGE, A.F. & A.M.
CORNERSTONE LAYING CEREMONY
FORMAL INSTRUCTIONS
UPDATED 2021**

PREFACE

This set of Formal Instructions has been amended to reflect changes in the organization and scheduling of the event and also eliminates some of the previous requirements of the local lodges. If you have an old instruction packet, please refer to these instructions for direction. The Cornerstone Ceremony is in the Grand Lodge “Ceremonies” Manual dated 2021.

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M. of Nebraska reserves the sole right to perform the Masonic ceremony of laying cornerstones of Federal, State, County and City buildings as well as all buildings erected for religious, educational, and charitable purposes, buildings erected for public use or buildings with significant ties to Masonry.

PLANNING THE COMMUNITY EVENT

The cornerstone ceremony provides Masonry with an opportunity to present our Fraternity to the community in a positive light. The Grand Lodge encourages local lodges to plan their cornerstone ceremony as a *community* celebration. The dedication of public buildings should include community leaders, local and State officials and major benefactors, so it is important to set a date early to allow your State Senator or possibly the Governor an opportunity to schedule the event into their calendar. These officials and community leaders should also be offered an opportunity to respond during the event. The actual cornerstone ceremony takes approximately 30 minutes, which allows plenty of time for entertainment or responses from others. One of the services your local lodge can provide is to assist the Owner in planning the day’s events. The Grand Marshal can assist you in the planning and may be able to offer suggestions for activities in addition to the cornerstone ceremony.

OFFICER IN CHARGE

The Grand Marshal will be responsible for the cornerstone ceremony and will coordinate the event with the Master of the local lodge or his representative. For Grand Marshal contact information, contact the Grand Lodge Office.

Grand Lodge of Nebraska
301 N. Cotner Blvd
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-2315
(402) 475-4736
grandlodge@glne.org

REQUIREMENTS

A formal written request should be addressed to the MW Grand Master by the lodge in whose jurisdiction the cornerstone is being laid with a courtesy copy sent to the Grand Marshal.

CORNERSTONE

The local lodge is responsible for obtaining the Cornerstone. The Cornerstone must be of natural stone, typically granite or marble, and of suitable size to correspond with the cavity in the building. 16”H X 20”W seems to work fairly well. The Owner and Architect should be included in the selection process and in the case of new construction projects, the location, size and depth of the cavity required for the stone and capsule should be discussed and provisions made with a (operative) mason before the brick and mortar work is complete.

The Grand Lodge prefers the stone be purchased from a local monument dealer, but if one is unavailable or the price is too high, the Grand Marshal will assist you in obtaining the stone. A number

of lodges have purchased cornerstones from Wegner Monument Company in Central City, Nebraska (308-946-2032). The average stone should run around \$250.00 depending on size and thickness and the Grand Lodge will reimburse up to \$125.00 to the local lodge with proper receipts. The stones may vary in thickness from 1 inch to 3 inches.

The inscription on the stone should read:

**(NAME OF BUILDING)
LAID BY THE
FREEMASONS OF NEBRASKA**



**(MONTH) (DAY), (YEAR)
M.:W.: (GRAND MASTERS NAME) – ONLY IF A MASONIC STRUCTURE
GRAND LODGE A.F. & A.M.**

Additional inscriptions to the stone, such as an appropriate Masonic emblem are acceptable but a copy of the proof for the final inscription must be forwarded to the Grand Marshal for review prior to the stone being carved.

Despite what the Ceremonies Manual indicates, the Grand Master's name is included only on a cornerstone for a Masonic structure.

The local lodge is responsible for ordering the stone, having it at the site the day of the ceremony, and confirming the installation of the stone after the ceremony.

CAPSULE & CAVITY

The capsule for the articles to be deposited behind or in the area of the stone is to be made of non-corrosive metal such as copper, brass, stainless steel, or plastic and must be capable of being sealed air tight. The capsule should be made to fit easily into the cavity. Copper or brass capsules may be obtained at a local radiator or sheet metal shop and can be soldered shut after the ceremony. If you need assistance the Grand Marshal may be able to provide contacts to provide a capsule.

DEPOSITS – PUBLIC BUILDINGS

The only Grand Lodge material required to be included in the capsule for Public Buildings is a copy of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. Lodge Officers Directory. The directory will be furnished to the local lodge by the Grand Marshal.

DEPOSITS – MASONIC BUILDINGS

The Grand Lodge will furnish one copy of the following materials for dedications of Masonic Buildings:

- Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. Lodge Officers Directory
- Copy of the Laws of Freemasonry in Nebraska
- Copy of the proceedings from the last communication of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M.
- Copy of the proceedings from the Royal Arch Masonry in Nebraska
- Copy of the proceedings from Cryptic Masonry in Nebraska
- Copy of the proceedings from Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Nebraska
- Copy of the Rules and Regulations of the Nebraska Masonic Home
- Copy of the proceedings of the Nebraska Masonic Home
- Copy of the roster of Nebraska Veteran Freemasonry Association
- Copy of the proceedings of the Grand Chapter O.E.S. of Nebraska
- Copy of the proceedings of the Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children

OPENING LODGE

The local or host lodge must be opened in the Master Mason Degree prior to the laying of a cornerstone. After the Grand Master is received, he will declare an occasional lodge of the Grand Lodge opened for the purpose of laying a cornerstone. The Grand Marshal will make a declaration for the occasional lodge.

RECEIVING THE GRAND MASTER

Whenever possible, the local or host lodge will formally receive the Grand Master into their lodge. The schedule for receiving will be coordinated with the Grand Marshal. Instructions for the reception of the Grand Master are in the Grand Lodge "Ceremonies" Manual dated 2021. Please contact your Deputy Custodian or the Grand Marshal with questions or assistance in receiving the Grand Master.

INVITATIONS TO SPECIAL GUESTS

The local lodge should issue a formal written invitation to the neighboring lodges, civic organizations, and fraternal organizations in the community. Additionally the mayor, city administrator, and city council should be invited.

As soon as a date is set, the Owner or Administrator should send a formal invitation to the area's State Senator, the Governor and any other high ranking official they wish to invite. The Owner should also be asked to send invitations to any guests they wish to invite to the ceremony or provide a list to the lodge, who may send the invitations as a service to the Owner. Your State Senator will always find time to get in front of a crowd of his constituents, and we have seen the Governor attend these dedications also. (*Plan ahead, Plan early!!!!*)

WHO TO NOTIFY

Local newspapers and television and radio stations should be notified. It is recommended to have notices of the cornerstone ceremony in local newspapers and if possible to have radio and television notices of the cornerstone ceremony.

SAMPLE TIME FORMAT

Provide the day's format to the Grand Marshal for review prior to making final arrangements.

A typical day for a cornerstone ceremony begins with the opening of the local lodge, (usually in the morning), then receiving the Grand Master, followed by a lunch or dinner. There is usually a break after lunch to socialize then travel to the site for set up and practice followed by another short break before the ceremony.

This is a typical schedule and can be altered any way you like in consultation with the Grand Marshal. Following is a more detailed format with the duties of the local lodge members.

Open Lodge and Receive the Grand Master

Following are some pointers that are not in the Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual. After the lodge opening, the Grand Master will leave the room and the lodge Master will invite the Ladies and Guests into the lodge for receiving the Grand Master. The Committee will retire to the reception room; **they do not salute at the Altar when retiring or entering if the lodge is open to the public.** The Grand Master will then be received as outlined in the Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual.

The Grand Master will direct the local or host lodge Senior Deacon to conduct the Grand Lodge Officers to the East, facing West, for introductions of the officers, as well as the wives in attendance. He will then ask the Senior Deacon to do the same for the Past Grand Masters and the Deputy Grand Custodians present. The Grand Master will then proceed with his remarks. He will declare an occasional lodge of the Grand Lodge open, after which the Grand Marshal will make a declaration. All will then retire for lunch and/or the cornerstone.

The important thing to remember is to relax and have a good time; the Grand Lodge Officers are not there to judge lodge proficiency, but to share in the fellowship.

Lunch

A lunch or dinner is usually provided, but not required for the Grand Lodge Officers and their guests. If provided, the choice is left to the local lodge and can be anything from sandwiches to a sit down meal. The choice is yours.

Practice

A practice/walk through will be scheduled after the day's format is planned (usually 1 to 2 hours prior to the Ceremony). The following people will need to attend the practice/walk thru:

- ▶ The Administrator who will make the formal request for the ceremony
- ▶ One (1) Past Master from the local or host lodge to carry the Book of Constitutions
- ▶ The Architect or one (1) local or host lodge Mason who will receive the working tools
- ▶ Representatives of the Knights of Columbus if they wish to participate
- ▶ Representatives of the York Rite if they plan on participating
- ▶ A bugler to provide the trumpet blast during the proclamation
 - A bell or chime may be substituted
- ▶ Color Guard to present the Colors (Legion, VFW, Shrine, Boy Scouts, National Sojourners, local ROTC, etc.)
- ▶ Job's Daughters or Rainbow if the cornerstone is to be decorated
- ▶ Any group or individual providing music for the event

Ceremony

The ceremony is in the Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual dated 2021 and can be adjusted as needed. The Grand Marshal will determine in which direction the procession will march. The procession will normally march in behind the Color Guard and hold while the Colors are posted.

The Grand Marshal will conduct the Grand Master to the podium and seat the lines. The members of the host/local and visiting lodges are invited to join the procession, but will sit in the audience. Grand Lodge Officers, brethren assisting in the Cornerstone Ceremony, and the cornerstone decorators will be provided seating near the podium. The Grand Master will typically lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance, after which the Ceremony will begin.

You will notice in the Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual there are several locations where a patriotic song can be sung or an instrumental piece played. Most communities have a small group who enjoys singing at events like these and would probably accept an invitation if extended one. You may approach your school band or choir instructor about the possibility of having the school band perform. This is a great way to get the younger generation to witness a Masonic function.

If music is provided during the lowering of the cornerstone, it should be a short refrain and will be played while the cornerstone is being lowered and finished before the next movement, then again each time the cornerstone is lowered. A full version of a musical selection may be played/sung after the cornerstone is lowered the third time.

Following are the items the local lodge will need to provide for the event:

- The cornerstone
- A podium for the speakers
- A public address system (can be provided by Grand Lodge, but need to know early)
- Aprons for local and visiting brethren
- Flowers for Job's Daughters/Rainbow to decorate the cornerstone (long stem carnations work well)
- Chairs for the Grand Lodge Officers (approximately 20)
- Chairs for the audience
- American flag with base – if none is available
- Any other flags and bases (i.e., State flag)

Following are the groups or individuals you will need to confirm:

- Formal Requester (Administrator who will request the ceremony be performed)
- Bugler or trumpeter
- Color Guard
- Job's Daughters/Rainbow
- Architect or one local lodge Mason
- One lodge Past Master to carry the Book of Constitutions

Following is a check list to complete:

- _____ Review dates for the ceremony with the Grand Master, Grand Marshal, and Owner
- _____ Confirm the final date and time with the Grand Marshal and the Owner
- _____ Review cornerstone layout with the Owner
- _____ Provide Grand Marshal with a proof before engraving the cornerstone
- _____ Order cornerstone
- _____ Order capsule
- _____ Arrange for the installation of the cornerstone by a local craftsman
- _____ Confirm the day's format and schedule with the Grand Marshal
- _____ Send invitations
- _____ Print programs
- _____ Plan meal
- _____ Contact the below organizations about participation:
 - _____ Job's Daughters
 - _____ Rainbow
 - _____ DeMolay
 - _____ Eastern Star
 - _____ Scottish Rite
 - _____ York Rite
 - _____ Knights Templar
 - _____ Shrine
 - _____ Knights of Columbus
 - _____ Other local Societies or Organizations
- _____ Notify local newspapers and television and radio stations
- _____ Color Guard
- _____ American Flag and Flag holder if there is no Color Guard
- _____ Requestor - This is a speaking part, but the material is printed and can be read
- _____ Bugler or trumpeter, and other Musicians
- _____ Order flowers for the decoration of the cornerstone
- _____ Podium
- _____ Public Address System
- _____ Aprons for Brethren
- _____ Chairs for Grand Lodge Officers and audience
- _____ Follow up to make sure the cornerstone gets installed