

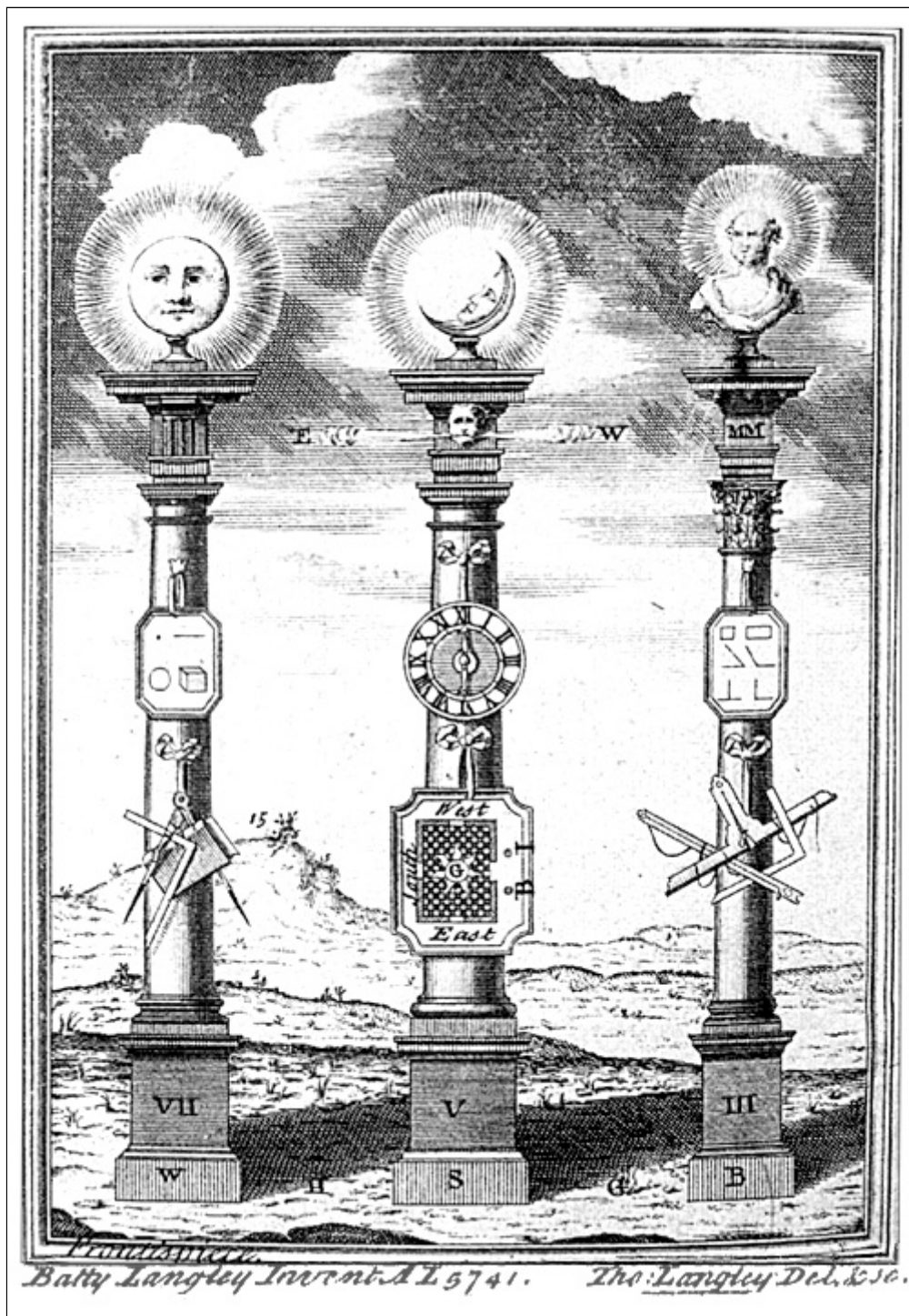
# Academia Lodge № 847

- [About Our](#)
- [Lodge](#)
- [Statement of](#)
- [Principles](#)
- [Lectures](#)
- [\\_ & Symposia](#)
- [2012 MRF](#)
- [Symposium](#)
- [Library Articles](#)
- [by Our](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Visual Arts](#)
- [Reference](#)
- [Shelf](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Traditional](#)
- [Lodges](#)
- [Masonic](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Bodies Search](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## **The Langley Engraving**

### **and an Abstract of the Old Charges**

**by Shawn Eyer, P.:M.:**



Frontispiece  
*The Builder's Jewel,*  
*or, the Youth's Instructor and Workman's Remembrancer*  
Batty Langley and Thomas Langley  
London: R. Ware, 1741

from a design by Batty Langley (1696–1751), engraved by his brother, Thomas Langley (1702–1751)

The frontispiece appears bearing the Masonic year, "A[nno]. L[ucis]. 5741." This is important early evidence for the symbolism of Ancient Craft Masonry. First, it shows that many of the symbolic associations that exist today were **already in place** in before 1741, despite many claims to the contrary.

Particularly notable are: the specific associations of the three orders with Wisdom, Strength and Beauty (and the officers which embody those ideals); the Blazing Star on the Mosaic Pavement; the point/line/plane/solid diagram; and the "H" and "G" on the ground, apparently in reference to the "Holy Ground" of the lodge floor.

In the background, immediately below the numeral 15, may be represented what some early brethren called the "mossy house" of the slain master. It is topped by a shrub, perhaps meant to be an Acacia. The number 15 is likely in reference to the legend current at that time that Solomon sent "Fifteen Loving Brothers" out to locate the missing architect. This phrase is found in Samuel Pritchard's 1730 exposure, **Masonry Dissected**:

Fifteen Loving Brothers, by Order of King Solomon, went out of the West Door of the Temple, and divided themselves from Right to Left within Call of each other; and they agreed that if they did not find the Word in him or about him, the first Word should be the Master's Word.

Early features visible here that became rare in later designs include the "Wind Blowing East and West," the visage of Hiram Abiff, and the clock at High Twelve.

This engraving covers all of the Blue Lodge degrees, but it represents an early version of the "three pillars" design that eventually would become the standard [tracing board of the Apprentice degree](#) specifically (as well as the standard form for English Grand Lodge certificates). It could be Batty Langley's original design (in which case, he is the unsung originator of an important part of Masonic symbolism), or it may be drawn from lodge boards in use prior to 1741.

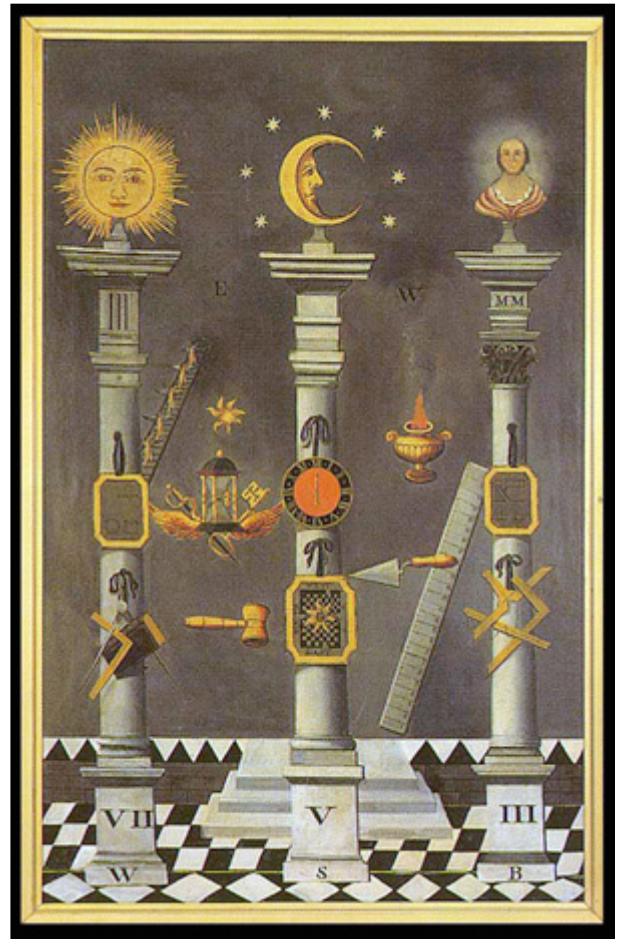
## A Later Version

English writer Julian Rees has brought to light the strong parallel between Langley's engraving and a later American version. This painted adaptation of the Langley board (pictured, right) originated in Hobart, New York in the early nineteenth century. The design shows some evolution, but still follows the essential pattern first delineated approximately one century earlier.

Added are: Jacob's Ladder (with five angels), the Hourglass (with wings, representing **Tempus Fugit**, the Pot of Incense, the 24-Inch Gauge, the Trowel, the Gavel, and the Three Steps.

Certain details have, in turn, disappeared. The "E" and "W" are still there, but with no allegorical figure of blowing upon them... leaving them decontextualized. The background depicting the grave of Hiram upon the hill has been completely dropped.

The existence of this painting shows that the Langleys' engraving was known to Masons in the New World many decades after it first appeared.



## Brother Langley's Career

Batty Langley (1696–1751) was an architect and landscape designer. His efforts to promote a new form of Gothic architecture, restored along the lines of the five classical orders, met with criticism. Nevertheless, his works were popular, and had a strong influence on architecture in the architecture of the New World. For example, George Washington relied on several of his designs when building Mount Vernon. Architectural historian James Stevens Curl writes: "In spite of his strange name, Langley was anything but 'batty', and his books are, to this day, highly intelligent and useful, especially in respect of drawing the Orders and other Classical detail. Indeed, his methods are often easier and more practical than those advocated by more celebrated writers of the period, and his works deserve a more serious assessment than they have enjoyed..." (**Georgian Architecture**, p. 52) [For the record, the name Batty was a diminutive of Bartholomew.]



Although the place and date of his initiation are unknown, one may deduce from several facts that Bro.: Langley was an enthusiastic Mason. First, some of his books bear Masonic dedications. In 1726, he published **Practical Geometry**, which was dedicated to Lord Paisley, as "the Head of a most Ancient and Honourable Society." At that time, Paisley was the Grand Master of Masons in England. In another work, **Ancient Masonry** (1736), his dedication concludes, "to all others the Right Hon. and Right Worshipful Masters of Masonry, by their humble servant and affectionate **brother**, B. Langley." Another evidence of his zeal for the Order is that he adopted

the pseudonym "Hiram," and used it at times in public writing. Furthermore, Langley bestowed names such as Euclid, Vitruvius, Archimedes and Hiram upon his sons.

Finally, it must be noted that in one of his books, Langley records an account of the history of Freemasonry. The story follows the pattern of the so-called "Old Charges." Langley's Abstract is regarded by Wallace McLeod as drawn partly from early manuscripts of the Old Charges, and partly from Anderson's updated version as given in the **Constitutions** of 1723. However, it is equally likely that Langley was simply summarizing the manuscript history that was passed down in his lodge, with no particular knowledge of its sources and no assembly on his part.

Langley's Abstract, like some other versions of the Old Charges, includes reference to Euclid and "Hermes, the Father of Wisdom," in the middle of an otherwise Biblical account.

## **The Langley Abstract of the Old Charges (H.4)**

In the fourth edition of **The Builder's Complete Assistant** (1736), Bro.: published the following account of the history of Masonry:

### PART II. OF GEOMETRY.

#### Introduction.

The next Science in order after Arithmetic is Geometry, the most excellent Knowledge in the world, as being the Basis or Foundation of all Trade, on which all Arts depend. Geometry is speculative and practical; the former demonstrates the Properties of Lines, Angles, and Figures; the latter teaches how to apply them to Practice in Architecture, Trigonometry, Mensuration, Surveying, Mechanicks, Perspective, Dialling, Astronomy, Navigation, Fortification, &c. This Art was first invented by Jabal the Son of Lamech and Adah, by whom the First House with Stones and Trees was built.

Jabal was also the first that wrote on this subject, and which he performed, with his Brethren, Jubal, Tubal Cain, and Naamah, who together wrote on two Columns the Arts of Geometry, Musick, working in Brass and Weaving, which were found (after the flood of Noah) by Hermarines, a Descendant from Noah, who was afterwards called Hermes, the Father of Wisdom, and who taught those Sciences to other Men. So that in a short time the Science of Geometry became known to many, and even to those of the highest Rank, for the mighty Nimrod, King of Babylon, understood Geometry, and was not only a Mason himself, but caused others to be taught Masonry, many of whom he sent to build the City of Nineve and other Cities in the Craft. Abraham was also a Geometer, and when he went into Egypt he taught Euclid, the then most worthy Geometrician in the world, the Science of Geometry, to whom the whole world is now largely indebted for its unparalleled Elements of Geometry. Hiram, the chief conductor of the Temple of Solomon, was also an excellent Geometer, as was Greens, a curious

Mason who worked at the Temple, and who afterwards taught the Science of Masonry in France.

England was entirely unacquainted with this noble Science, until the time of St. Alban, when Masonry was then Established, and Geometry was taught to most workmen concerned in Building; but as soon after this Kingdom was frequently invaded, and nothing but Troubles and Confusion reigned all the Land over, this noble Science was disregarded until Athelstan, a worthy King of England, suppressed those Tumults and brought the Land into Peace; when Geometry and Masonry were re-established, and great numbers of Abbeys and other Stately Buildings were erected in this Kingdom. Edwin the Son of Athelstan was also a great Lover of Geometry, and used to read Lectures thereof to Masons. He also obtained from his Father a Charter to hold an Assembly, where they would, within the Realm, once in every Year, and himself held the first at York, where he made Masons; So from hence it is, that Masons to this day have a grand-meeting and Feast once in every Year. Thus much by way of Introduction, to shew the Use, and how much the Science of Geometry has been esteemed by some of the Greatest Men in the World, and which with regard to the Public Good of my Country, I have here explained, in the most plain and easy manner that I am able to do, and to which I proceed.



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