



# THE HOUSTON VALLEY HERALD

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## Understanding The Purpose of Scottish Rite Clubs

By ADAM B. OLIVIER 32°  
Editor-in-Chief



Photo by Ian Wilkinson 32° KCCH. Photo of members gathered for the 2021 Steve Cooke Scottish Rite Club "Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal".

Several brothers from the Brazos Valley have asserted that the Steve Cooke Scottish Rite Club sets the standard for Scottish Rite Clubs. The club was chartered in 1955 and is the oldest club in the Orient of Texas. It has an active membership of brothers from all ages and only one business meeting a year. Also, the 12° and 19° reunion degree teams consist exclusively of Steve Cooke Club members. In an era where many Masons expect monthly, or sometimes bi-monthly, meetings or get-togethers, Steve Cooke goes against the grain with just a few meetings per year. But that, according to the club's membership, is an ingredient to its success.

When asked why Steve Cooke flourishes, the newly elected club President Brother Matt Caldwell 32°, a resident of Caldwell, said, "It's a simple answer: we do Scottish Rite Masonry. We have two feasts a year where we [symbolically] open the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> degrees – we make an event out of it."

Brother Caldwell then drew a parallel to blue lodges. "Consider this: before Warren Lodge existed, Masons in Caldwell had to go fifty miles on horseback to Bastrop. This was a time when an armed man could get killed on a journey like that. They weren't taking risks like that for trivial things, they got something out of it. The fellowship was important, but that wasn't the only thing. They were practicing Masonry! They were doing degrees. They were learning 'The Mysteries'. You can't get that anywhere else. Other than going to a Houston Valley reunion, I can't get the Scottish Rite Masonry we have at Steve Cooke anywhere else."

Brother Caldwell explained that driving two hours from Caldwell to Houston was a significant investment of time for him. He lives on and operates a ranch as well as working in the insurance industry. The club, however, is just a short drive away in the Brazos Valley.

Brother Seth Hudson 32° KCCH has been the Secretary of the club since 2014. While he would understate his contribution to Steve Cooke, other brothers who were interviewed for this article mentioned the amount of work he puts into the meetings. He ensures that the one business meeting held every year runs smoothly, the brothers know their lines for both the Feast of Tishri

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*Memento Mori* (c. 1650) by Frans van Everbroeck. Mr. Everbroeck was a Flemish painter who eventually became a "master" in a Guild of Saint Luke (an artistic trade-guild in the Lowlands of Europe).

## Memento Mori: The Reason We Must Remember

By ADAM B. OLIVIER 32°  
Editor-in-Chief

Masons from the blue lodge and a large assortment of appendant bodies are not shy of using symbols. The most recognizable are the square and compasses, but some brothers may be familiar with the majestic double-headed eagle. As any Master Mason knows, these symbols are not just aesthetically pleasing representatives – they have distinct meaning. A symbol that some Masons consider taboo is the skull. When skeptical brothers question why a Mason would wear such a symbol an old phrase may come to mind: "Momento Mori."

"Momento Mori" means "Remember you will die" and literally translates from Latin to "Remember Death". This old Latin phrase originated in the Middle Ages, possibly even before, and was used by both Christian theologians and secular philosophers alike to remind an audience that they are mortal and their time on Earth is guaranteed to come to an end. We, as Masons, should have a clear recollection of the significance of death from the blue lodge. However, the notion of "Momento Mori" and consequences of finite life are not alien concepts to the Scottish Rite.

In the magnum opus of Illustrious Brother Albert Pike 33°, *Morals and Dogma*, the word "Death" is used over 250 times. His references range from the tales of death among ancient gods to metaphorical concepts surrounding death. He also states that the fear of death should not cause a Mason to do wrong.

In the closing pages of *Morals and Dogma*, when discussing the last few degrees, Brother Pike wrote: "And the Chivalric Degrees have led you on the same path, by showing you the excellence of generosity, clemency, forgiveness of injuries, magnanimity, contempt of danger, and the paramount obligations of Duty and Honor. They have taught you to overcome the fear of death, to devote yourself to the great cause of civil and religious Liberty, to be the Soldier of all that is just, right, and true... No base fear of danger or death, no sordid ambitions or pitiful greeds or base considerations can tempt a true Scottish Knight to dishonor."

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*Continued from the front.*

and the Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal, he helps set tables for the festive board, and he has been seen cleaning dishes (sometimes alone) after dinners involving 20-30 people.

“Scottish Rite Masonry meant a lot to me early on, and the club gave me the opportunity to experience it locally,” Brother Hudson said. “The Steve Cooke Scottish Rite Club exists to bring Scottish Rite Masonry to Masons of the Brazos Valley. The club is for those brothers who can’t make it to their Valley meetings. Scottish Rite clubs in general are meant to bring Scottish Rite Masonry to areas that are not easily accessible.”

“We only ask for dues of \$5.00 a year. We don’t have a treasury, the money simply covers our expenses. We meet three times a year, one of which is a business meeting. Meeting every month would make [the club] just another Masonic body to join,” Brother Hudson said.

The three annual meetings of Steve Cooke include: a business meeting where officers are elected and installed, the Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal, and the Feast of Tishri.

“The Feast of Tishri is about being thankful for the bounty of that year and the Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal reminds us of those that we lost,” said Brother Michael D. Gerst 32°. Brother Gerst said that he regularly attends Steve Cooke meetings for the fellowship and Masonic experience at the meetings.

The Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal includes ritualistic ceremony in the lodge room of the Brazos Valley Masonic Library and Museum with the “Mystic Feast”, extinguishing, and relighting the lights. The Feast of Tishri is a formal festive board where select officers offer toasts and each of the brothers assembled enjoy a steak dinner.

The Steve Cooke Scottish Rite Club first and foremost owes its success to its members. Over time these members have sculpted a club that rarely meets, yet has a large and active membership; a club with just one business meeting a year, but with a full officer line; a club with only two esoteric meetings a year, yet with ritual that is performed reverently and has meaning to its audience; a club with Masons from various lodges and valleys, yet the brothers all know each other and enjoy a high degree of fellowship twice a year.

The purpose of a Scottish Rite Club is simple: to bring the best aspects of Scottish Rite Masonry to local Scottish Rite Masons.

## Announcements

### Scottish Rite Scholarships

The Grand Lodge of Texas sent a message from Illustrious and Right Worshipful Michael L. Wiggins SGIG. He announced, “There are four \$1,500 one-year scholarships available for undergraduate and graduate students who are or will be attending Texas A&M University during the 2022 academic year.” Applicant criteria and the application for this scholarship, and others, can be found on the Scottish Rite website at:

<https://scottishrite.org/philanthropy/scholarships/national>

### Open Parts for The 13<sup>th</sup> Degree Team

The 13<sup>th</sup> degree “Royal Arch of Solomon” is now led by Brother Michael Charlton 32°. Any brother interested in joining the 13<sup>th</sup> degree team can contact Brother Charlton at:

[Charltonm98@gmail.com](mailto:Charltonm98@gmail.com)

### New “Journey Passport” Program

The Houston Valley is now participating in the “Journey Passport” program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at:

[acompass@yahoo.com](mailto:acompass@yahoo.com)

### Upcoming Steve Cooke Scottish Rite Club Meeting

The Steve Cooke Scottish Rite Club will meet at the Brazos Valley Masonic Library and Museum for the Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal at 7:00PM on Wednesday April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. All Scottish Rite Masons are welcome. For more information contact:

[SteveCookeSRC@HoustonScottishRite.org](mailto:SteveCookeSRC@HoustonScottishRite.org)

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If a man understands that his death is inevitable, then he may understand that some things are worth risking the ultimate sacrifice. Although President Reagan was not a Mason, he illustrated this idea succinctly in 1964:

“You and I know and do not believe that life is so dear and peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery. If nothing in life is worth dying for, when did this begin—just in the face of this enemy? Or should Moses have told the children of Israel to live in slavery under the pharaohs? Should Christ have refused the cross? Should the patriots at Concord Bridge have thrown down their guns and refused to fire the shot heard 'round the world? The martyrs of history were not fools, and our honored dead who gave their lives to stop the advance of the Nazis didn't die in vain.”

We are called to “Momento Mori” so that we live our lives justly and to the fullest, and so that we are not afraid to stand up for things that are worth dying for.

## Photos Taken Last Meeting



Photos by Jason Rees 32° KCCH.

## Contributing to The Houston Valley Herald

The *Herald* is the monthly newsletter for the Houston Valley of the Texas Orient of the Scottish Rite. If you are interested in contributing pictures, writing, or if you would like to have an announcement posted, email:

[HoustonValleyHerald@gmail.com](mailto:HoustonValleyHerald@gmail.com)