

[PDF] American Freemasons: Three Centuries Of Building Communities

Mark A. Tabbert - pdf download free book



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly This slender history begs the question: who is really qualified to write about secret societies? Tabbert, a Master Mason, doubts the "ability" of non-Mason historians to "fully understand the craft" since they "have not actually witnessed the rituals performed" within the society. His personal investment, however, makes his volume sound so defensive at times, even emotive, that his lavishly illustrated history of U.S. Masonry—from its Revolutionary origins to its currently moribund dotage—reads more like an apology for, or a love letter to, the society than a work

of measured, scholarly rigor. The opening chapter recounts, in compelling detail, Masonry's European germination in the hotbed of the Enlightenment. But the second chapter initiates Tabbert's book-long habit of overstating Masonry's centrality to U.S. history-and its virtue. For example, while the "quarrelsome man" who threatened to publicly expose Masonic rituals in 1826 is vilified as a "restless, jack-of-all trades drifter," the faceless criminals who kidnapped and killed him (severely tarnishing Freemasonry's reputation in America) are given the author's reprieve: "What actually happened remains a mystery, but most likely he was killed by his abductors either accidentally or in a fit of passion." The book makes a strong case for the Masons' outward missions of civility, charity and community-building. Also notable is its attention to the Prince Hall Order of African-Americans. Yet can the institution's 40-year decline in membership really be blamed on such "social earthquakes" as television, shopping malls, "teenage drug use and pregnancy"? Maybe the lodge is an "anachronism," as Tabbert says, but his claim that Masons "are almost completely incapable of entering into a conspiracy (except to do good) or keeping a secret (except in hiding private acts of kindness)" appears disingenuous nonetheless.

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Review

"Visually, this is an attractive book: large format, profusely illustrated, just on the right side of coffee-table-ish."

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