

The Masonic Star Dilemma

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The original Great Seal of the United States (1782), of which Freemasons were involved in the design, had 6-pointed stars. The original drawing and engraved die used to print the seal are shown on the right. Our ancient brethren, including George Washington, preferred the 6-pointed star. However, in 1776 he had approved the use of a 5-pointed star for the American flag (adopted in 1777). The seal was later redesigned and a 5-pointed star was used.

As the original seal was designed and produced 5 years after the flag was approved, why did the seal designers use a 6-pointed star?

Albert Mackey tells us that the Blazing Star (definitely not the 5-pointed star) is the star of Freemasonry. However, he does not provide an image of a Blazing Star, but gives extensive documentation on its significance in the Ancient Mysteries and in the Masonic Order.

One interpretation of a Blazing Star is essentially what Moses saw when he received the Ten Commandments from God. Another later comparison is the Star of Bethlehem. A 6-pointed star definitely meets these requirements better than a 5-pointed star. The reason is that it more closely resembles how we see light from a distance.

It is likely that the Great Seal designers had this in mind. The 5-pointed star is definitely not a traditional Masonic symbol. However, our Order effectively adopted it and conveniently assigned the Five Points of Fellowship to its symbolism.

It also ended up in the center of the Mosaic Pavement as “the star that guided the wise men to the place our Saviour’s nativity,” traditionally represented as seen in the last image on the right.

Whatever the case, the star in all its forms is an age-old symbol and can be assigned various meanings. As to Masonic Philately, a 6-pointed star on a stamp would be just as appropriate as a 5-pointed star for a Masonic collection (perhaps just a bit more).
(Stamps Illustrated: Turkey, Issued 1915)

