

Trestleboard

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 4

December 2008

NJ Lodge of Masonic Research and Education's purpose is to foster the education of the Craft at large through prepared research and open discussion of the topics concerning Masonic history, symbolism, philosophy, and current events.

Next Communication

New Jersey Lodge of Masonic Research and Education meets on the second Saturday in March, June, September and December. Our next communication will be held on **Saturday, December 13, 2008 at 9:30 a.m. at:**

**Trenton Masonic Temple
100 Barracks Street
Trenton, New Jersey**

All Master Masons are Welcome!

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From the East

Bro. Jay Hochberg, Worshipful Master

Brethren,

Brethren, I have enjoyed serving as Master of our lodge, but I am even happier over what's to come! Serving in the East has been an eventful and educational experience for me, one that I would not have wanted to miss, but not only am I ready to get back on the sidelines where I belong, but I'm also excited by what I predict will be a grand era for us.

With Bro. Ben Hoff ascending to the Oriental Chair, I believe we are beginning a golden age for our lodge. In addition to being one of our two top scholars, Ben has the temperament for this job. For these, he undoubtedly will succeed where I failed. With Bro. Ray Thorne in the West, we'll enjoy profit and pleasure thanks to a classy continuity for the next four years.

I have been interacting with lodges of research both here and abroad for a number of years, and I assure you that LORE is among the strongest of such lodges. The quality of the content produced by our scholars, coupled with the loyal support of The Happy Few who frequent our meetings – and even our modest financial standing – place us in an enviable spot within this particular niche in Freemasonry.

And speaking of research lodges and the Masons who love them, I'm working with two in particular on a project that will bring our three lodges together in a celebration of Masonic education. The details have to be worked out, but I think we can expect an afternoon of top quality Masonic research presented by the gifted and daring of each of these lodges. Perhaps in New York City in 2009.

I thank all the officers of our lodge for their time. I congratulate all who have presented their work at our podium. I encourage everyone else to contribute in ways they feel they can be useful. I'll be on the sidelines (but not napping) if you need me.

Jay Hochberg
Worshipful Master

From the West

Bro. Ben Hoff, Senior Warden

Satisfied Brethren?

An obvious precaution to take before opening a lodge is to insure that all present are masons. Some sort of procedure for insuring this has been included as a part of lodge opening ceremonies for as long as masons have had ritualized openings any more complicated than simply calling the meeting to order. Like anything else in Masonic ritual, there is no universal standard for how this should be done, even though all masons may agree that something fitting the purpose is necessary. Some lodges have complicated procedures involving signs, tokens, or words, either given in place, or passed from brother to brother. Other lodges forego such time consuming complications in favor of a simple avouchment on the part of one or both Wardens, and when they are in doubt, by the Deacons or even the brethren. Still other lodges may observe some intermediate blend of practices, while many – but not all – American lodges employ variations of both methods at different points in the opening ceremonies. New Jersey lodges are required to employ a variant of this more complicated, double-check procedure. Putting aside the question of how these variations arose, which is a far more complicated story than space permits in this essay, the significant point is that all these procedures were basically instituted to insure the *bona fides* of those attending the meeting.

Recently, however, I have come to hear from several sources of another interpretation of the opening procedures. It has been proposed among some that the question “are the brethren satisfied with each other” has an entirely different purpose in mind than simple avouchment of membership. They suppose it to mean “does any brother have a beef with any other brother that needs to be cleared up before they can sit harmoniously together in lodge”. While this may be a valuable reminder in keeping with much extra-ritualistic commentary found in Masonic literature, it strikes me as an over-reaching interpretation.

Let us suppose for a moment that this was the correct interpretation. What is the procedure if some brother stood and answered “I am not satisfied.” Should the Master ask the brother to leave, or ask who he was not satisfied with, and for both of them to leave until they settled their difference? What if a brother simply stood and left at that point, obviously indicating that he had a problem with someone? Would it enhance or disturb the harmony of the lodge to know that such obvious differences disturbed the brethren? Either way, tongues would wag and sides would be chosen. I cannot think of events more likely to disturb the peace and harmony of a lodge. Such differences should be cleared up well before things got to that point, and without other brothers even knowing about them. The midst of an opening ceremony is simply “not the proper time or place.” So for that reason alone, this cannot be a sound or logical interpretation, as attractive as it might otherwise seem, never mind being a departure from the comparative

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and historical practices and interpretations outlined above.

The fact that this interpretation was proposed by intelligent and well meaning parties in authoritative positions does serve to illustrate how Masonic ritual continues to evolve despite its supposed unchanging nature. The actual reasons why something is done are forgotten, usually because they are not recorded, or no longer apply. Then some loose end is picked-up and given an alternative interpretation, usually related to some commentary or illustration of Masonry, or other well-meaning idealization. If the new interpretation is sufficiently striking to become widely repeated among masons, it may eventually come to be accepted as ancient tradition, and enforced by someone in a position of Masonic authority. Adoption may lead to other innovations in related procedures or symbolism in order to reconcile the new with the old. By such means, we have come to accept Hiram's memorial (with the broken column, etc.); the slipper in the book or Ruth; the demand to teach an important lesson in charity; globes atop pillars; a winding stairway with fifteen rather than only seven steps; and a multitude of other large and small innovations that are easily documented as such. Indeed, I have no problem with innovations, as over time they have served to enrich the practice and symbolism of Freemasonry. But I think we also need to own our innovations as innovations, rather than try to pass them off as ancient truth, and the one single way things must be done or interpreted. The absolutist approach to Masonry has sadly led to much unproductive argument and the exclusion of valuable material from Masonic practice.

The Officers of New Jersey Lodge of Research and Education, No. 1786

wish you a very Happy Holidays!

Be Safe and Stay Healthy!

Remember your Obligations and your Brethren!

Be sure to include NJ LORE meetings on your 2009 Calendar!

NJ LORE needs you to continue to be a strong and vibrant Lodge!

Thanks to all our members for making 2008 a BIG SUCCESS!

From the Secretary's Desk...

Election and Installation of Officers will be taking place at the December meeting. If you are interested in taking a more active role NJ LORE please contact Bro. Hoff. Even if you do not want an officer's seat or they are all taken, I am sure there is *something* you could do to help our mission! In the future, I will be looking for Book Reviews as our present reviewer is retiring. Please let me know if you have a book you would like to recommend to the brethren.

Matt Korang, PM Secretary

It Came From the Internet

Bro. Matt Korang, Secretary/Editor

A Masonic Christmas Story

Posted December, 1997

By Wor. Bro. C.S.L. (Laurie) Lund & V.W.Bro. R.G. (Ron) Dixon

*'Twas nigh afore Christmas at the Freemason's Hall
(Civil Services' regular), the order was tall;
Reams from Grand Lodge, a notice of motion,
A ballot or two and a pause for devotion
To brethren departed of the year '94,
Plus a candidate who would soon walk the floor.*

*Our own Junior Warden, when faced with the crunch
Said, "Let's all call off and go upstairs for lunch."
The Master replied, as Masters all do,
Intoned in a voice reserved for the few,
"Before we partake of the fellowship there
Is the summons to read and a ballot to clear.
Not to mention the candidate, he's quaking with dread
At the stories of whether the goat has been fed."*

*The Master, exhorting the brethren to work,
A firm grip on the gavel, he turned with a jerk
To the Secretary, putting a shine to each lens,
Polished both to a lustre and reached for his pens.*

*"It's half past the hour," the Master then winced
At the stuff left to do and remained unconvinced
That the evening would go as smooth as he'd hoped
Since he'd gone to the trouble of feeding the goat.
"Though the ballot's behind us, the notice is gone,
Grand Lodge is finished, the work still goes on."*

*The Inner Guard knew as the Tyler did too
That knock, knock and knock was the right thing to do.
Sidebenchers slept soundly and were only stirred
When the crack of the candidate's knuckles was heard
The slight groan that penetrated lips that were pursed
Appeared to the Deacon as just a light curse.*

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From the South

Bro. Raymond C. Thorne, Junior Warden

Dear Brother,

The ends of the years are upon us this month.

When you think about it, the beginning and ending markers for measuring earth's orbit around the sun can be arbitrarily set on any date. The Ancient Egyptians started their year when they first saw Sirius, the Dog Star rise, roughly July 3 in our calendar. This announced the upcoming annual flooding of the Nile River. (Besides the beginning of the Dog Days of summer, astronomically July 3 makes sense to mark a year since it is about when earth is at aphelion or farthest from the sun.)

The Romans initially started their calendar with March 1, on the first day of spring and ended about 300 days later on the 30th day of the tenth month, or December. They later added two months, starting the year on January 1 and ending it twelve months later (with a month named to this day December). The astrological year also begins about the first day of spring.

Some social annual cycles, such as the school year, begin in the fall (i.e., after Labor Day). This country's fiscal year begins October 1. And, of course, the Jewish year starts in the fall.

I just realized, by coincidence, I could rationalize this column in any of LORE's quarterly Trestleboards. Also by coincidence, at the stroke of midnight local time when the new year is rung in, Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky, is on the meridian.

This is totally irrelevant to why the Gregorian, or western, calendar begins when it does. Astronomically, it would make more sense to move the start of the new year a day or two forward to coincide with earth's perihelion, or closest approach to the sun.

But our secular year begins when it does and thus overshadows the year endings I alluded to. The winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, is December 21 this year. Winter, spring, summer, fall.

The Feast of St. John the Evangelist is December 27. Cycle about six months to the Feast of St. John the Baptist, June 24, and you are about at the summer solstice, the longest day of the year (June 21 in 2009). Proceed six more months and you are back to the Feast of St. John the Evangelist again. Learning, zeal. Two parallel lines on opposite sides of the circle.

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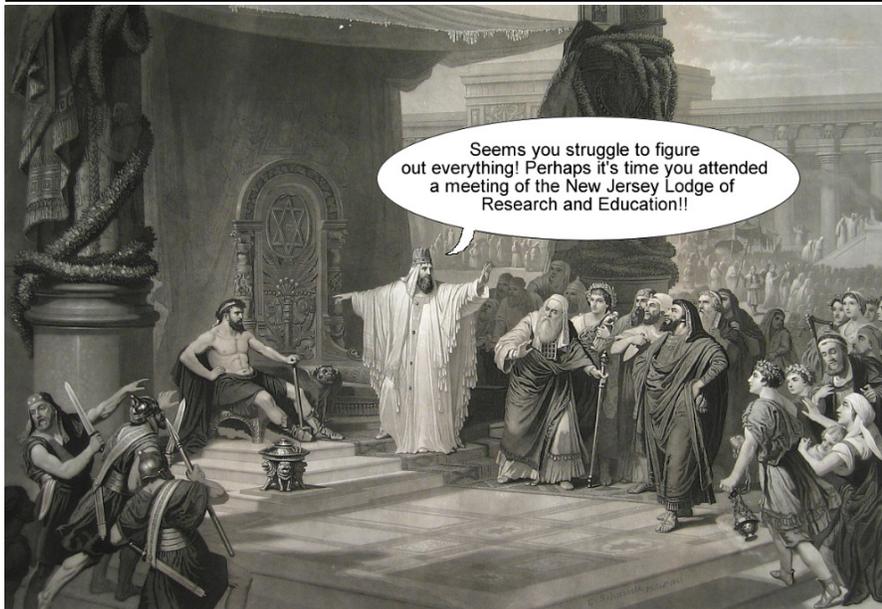
Connected to the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, at least in New Jersey, is the Annual Installation of officers of your regular lodge. Either in December on or before the 27th or the first regular communication succeeding St. John's Day.

Old years are coming to an end this month, circles are closing. But that means new years will be starting, new circles opening.

And so it goes.

Ray Thorne
Junior Warden

P.S. Join me on December 13th for the conclusion/commencement of a two-year cycle.



Finding it tough to figure out the meaning of all those symbols and allegories?

Hit a wall in your search for Masonic Knowledge??

Just frustrated with the same-ole, same-ole boring meetings???

Then it's time you gave NJ LORE No. 1786 a try!!!

Come out to our next meeting on Saturday September 13, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.

We guarantee you will not leave a meeting without learning something new.

Stop being frustrated and start enjoying Freemasonry again!!!

Masonic Book Review

Bro. Jay Hochberg

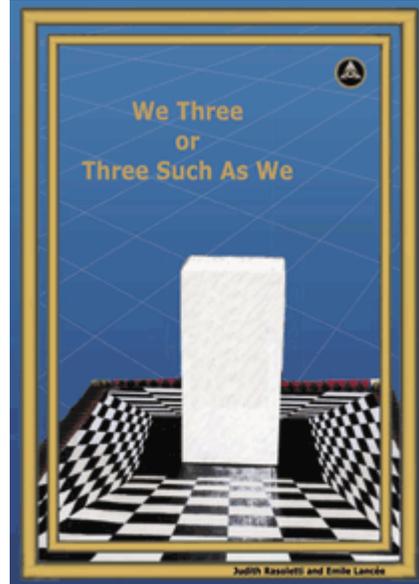
“We Three or Three Such As We”
By Judith Rasoletti and Emile Lancée
LeesMijnBoek, 2008, 217 pp.

The authors of the books we read – any books – presumably are professionals motivated by not only experience and knowledge of their subjects, but also hopefully a love for the same. In this particular book, we have it all.

This book’s subject is one that New Jersey Freemasons do not hear discussed with any accuracy or kindness: women in Masonry. Co-authors Rasoletti and Lancée have mixed together a trilogy of biographies with vivid descriptions of Freemasonry’s rituals, symbols and teachings. (And frankly we don’t hear those three subjects discussed regularly in our lodges either!)

The biographical subjects are Aimée Bothwell-Gosse, Marjorie Cecily Debenham, and Charlotte Jones. Not household names, and not found in Masonic reference books, but what makes their stories memorable is one night in 1949 at Lodge Castalia in Yorkshire. Jones, a widowed mother of two, was to be initiated; Debenham served as Worshipful Master; and Bothwell-Gosse, founder of the lodge, was seated with the dignitaries in the East. No one could have known it, but in time, these women and others will have built two “co-ed” Masonic jurisdictions in Great Britain and one international organization.

There are other actors who set this stage. The book tells how Elizabeth St. Leger-Aldworth was initiated in a regular lodge in Ireland circa 1712. Annie Besant entered Masonry in the French Co-Masonic circles at the *fin de siècle*. Maria Deraimes was a suffragette with a reputation for writing, oratory and political organizing who was initiated by a French lodge that suffered suspension by its grand lodge as punishment. These names do appear in popular Masonic references and other books. Before proceeding, it also must be noted that the United Grand Lodge of England acknowledged (not to be confused with *recognized*) Masonry for women. In a statement published a decade ago, UGLE explained how two grand lodges in Britain that admit women members are “otherwise regular in their practice,” and while inter-visitation is not possible, discussions do take place between UGLE and the women Masons “on matters of mutual concern.” So we’re not talking about science fiction here. Furthermore, please know that co-author Rasoletti will deliver a paper of these three biographies at the Second International Conference on the History of Freemasonry in Scotland next May. (If you plan to attend, she’ll appear in Session 12 on Saturday, the 30th.)



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As regards the symbolism of Masonry explained in this book, the authors let their biographical subjects do the talking. The results are splendid. Freemasonry is described glowingly, respectfully, as a cultural institution that advances moral truths and psychological understandings. This is the European model at labor. Not a raffle ticket nor bowl of chili to be found. Big ideas are topics in lodges from the beginning of the Masonic journey. The Entered Apprentice does not Pass to Fellowcraft until he/she presents a Piece of Architecture to the lodge. In other words, the new Mason authors a paper demonstrating an understanding of a symbol. It repeats after the Fellowcraft Degree, and throughout the Mason's career after the MM^o and beyond.

Marjorie Cecily Debenham, who would rise to become Grand Commander of her jurisdiction, the Order of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masonry for Men and Women, says this of Working Tools:

Now the journey continues, which for the Mason is a constant attempt to polish his stone, that Rough Ashlar which needs attention day and night. Masons polish the roughness with their Working Tools, the Chisel and the Mallet, alternating between the active and passive poles of their personality. The hidden aspects of their psyche are revealed with each blow of the mallet, chiseling another fine line that can be incisive or divisive, or smoothing, just as the relationships in their lives out there mirror the progress in here.

Those two sentences are but a tiny clue of how Freemasonry is regarded by Masons in jurisdictions we do not recognize. I don't want to turn a book review into a "their way is better" essay, but the differences between our systems is very significant. We attempt to memorize and recite 18th century prose, while they compose in style and content worthy of use in rituals themselves.

There are flaws in this book, but they are stylistic. Most obvious is the layout. In short, this book looks like it was designed in Microsoft Word with margins that are too broad. The typeface is a sans serif that implies a levity that this serious work does not deserve. There are plenty of terrific graphics, but captions are absent, and space is wasted because huge margins surround them. On the editorial side, a poor choice was made to allow many repeated uses of the Masonic punctuation called the triple period. This (∴) triangle of dots appears on many official and ceremonial Masonic documents. It is distracting in this book. For example, twice on page 135 the title "Most Illustrious Brother" is presented as "M: ∴ Ill: ∴ Br: ∴" which actually mutates the triple period, and it's not a matter of secrecy because the abbreviations guide in the back of the book decodes it all. A simple style would have benefited the reader. Or at least this one.

Brethren, since 2002 I have presented 25 books for your consideration, and I really hope one of those books has made some kind of difference to one of you. I selected this book now because its very existence testifies to the limitless horizon we confront when we have a good look at Freemasonry. There is so much more out there in the Masonic world than we know – or perhaps want to know. It isn't only history; it's happening today. There are Masons who merit our attention. They are not only in France; they're in New Jersey. There are things we can learn, even if we do not meet them on the Level. And brethren, it is in that spirit of inquiry and candor that I conclude my book reviews.

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*Onward they travel, the guide and the man
Seeking truth and enlightenment wherever they can
The secrets were given, the grip and the token,
Obligation was offered, the words then were spoken.
Though never, not once, was one heard to gloat
As the Entered Apprentice never did meet the goat.*

*The evening now ended, the candidate clear
Junior Warden entreats from the South us to hear
The oath we look forward to right from the start,
"Happy to meet and sorry to part."*

*Christmas had come to Civil Service that night
As men came together under the light
Giving freely of time as a labour of love
As we bent to the task of the Most High above.*

*To Stewards, to Deacons, the Tyler, the 'Guard
The Wardens, the Master, who all work so hard,
To Past Masters steady, Sidebenchers too
To Treasurer, Chaplain, the D. of C. who
Help carry the Lodge, year in and year out
To your family extended, a warm Christmas time.
Thank the G.A.O.T.U. we've run out of rhyme!*

Brethren,

You are cordially and fraternally invited to an Regular Communication of NJ Lodge of Masonic Research and Education No. 1786 to meet on Saturday, December 13, 2008 at the Trenton Masonic Temple, 100 Barracks St. Trenton, NJ at 9:30 a.m.

Order of Business

- Continental Breakfast (served 9:00 a.m.)
- Opening Lodge (9:30 a.m.)
- Short Business Meeting
- Election of Officers for 2009-2010 - Installation of Officers
- Presentations by members
- Closing
- Lunch and Fraternal Discussion

Officer's Dress – Business Attire

Grand Master of Masons of the State of New Jersey
Most Worshipful John Colligas
125 Prospect Avenue
Bridgewater, NJ 08807-1717
jcolligas@njmasonic.org

Officers for 2006-2008

Jay Hochberg P.O. Box 264 Caldwell, NJ 07006 Peninsula #99	Worshipful Master euclid47@earthlink.net
Bernhard W. Hoff 409 Willowbrook Dr. North Brunswick, NJ 08902 Highland Park Lodge #240	Senior Warden 732-398-1230 bhoff1356@aol.com
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J.R. Avanti (Protemp) M.B. Taylor #141	Senior Deacon 609-296-0238 avanti.pajra@att.net
Robert H. Morris (Protemp) Princeton #38	Junior Deacon 609-924-6178 validude2001@yahoo.com
Dennis Huey Keystone #153	Chaplain 609-927-0688 profhuey@earthlink.net
Scott Simmins Mercer #50	Tyler 609-882-5983 rdsxfn09@yahoo.com

From the Editor's Desk.....

Next Trestleboard will be published about March 1, 2009. We are always looking for articles. All articles must be submitted by February 15, 2009.

*Matthew Korang, PM, Secretary
mkorang@comcast.net*



New Jersey Lodge of Masonic
Research and Education No. 1786

Trenton Masonic Temple
100 Barracks St.
Trenton, NJ 08608



*Bringing Light to New
Jersey Freemasonry!*

**We're On the
Web!!
njlore1786.org**