

Trestleboard

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, September 8, 2007 at 9:30 a.m. at:**

**Union Lodge No. 19
60 Cedar Ave.
North Brunswick, NJ**

All Master Masons are Welcome!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From the East	2
From the West	3
From the South	4
Back Page Book Review	5

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!*

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njlore1786.org

From the East

Bro. Jay Hochberg, Worshipful Master

Greetings Brethren,

Tanned, rested and ready after our summer Refreshment, we resume labor with a program that thematically shows how Masonry's past isn't necessarily what we thought, and so conversely, Masonry's future can become what we make it.

"The Invention of Masonic Regularity" by Senior Warden Ben Hoff walks us through the process of how and why the very first Grand Lodge decided it needed to distinguish "regular" Masons and lodges from others. Essential information that clarifies an often misunderstood aspect of Masonic history and law.

"What a Nimrod: Masonic Lessons from the Tower of Babel" by yours truly is bound to surprise any brother who believes King Solomon was our first Grand Master. No, the Tower of Babel was the architectural heart of Freemasonry long before KST, and the Word was lost through the confusion of language there, according to Masonry's early literature.

Our third speaker is a longtime member of LORE who makes his first appearance at our podium. W. Bro. Sam Cintron is well known about the apartments of the Temple for his interest in what is collectively termed "the meaning of Masonry." Recently returned from the International Conference on the History of Freemasonry held in Scotland, Sam will present to us **"Our Masonic Legacy & Destiny into the 21st Century."**

In addition, the Lodge will introduce a new feature of our meetings. Tentatively titled "Stump the Band," we'll open the floor to anyone who has a question about Freemasonry. If there is something you always wanted to know about history, ritual, law, protocol, etc. we'll get answers for you. (You may be sorry you asked!)

Also, because of the anticipated length of our meeting, lunch will be served. (And if we can get more of you presenting papers at our meetings, lunch will have to become a regular part of our activities again.) Please give me a heads up if you're coming so we can arrange for enough food.

Fraternally,

Jay Hochberg—Worshipful Master

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From the Editor's Desk.....

Next Trestleboard will be published about Decemeber, 2007. We are always looking for articles. All articles must be submitted by November 15, 2007.

Matthew Korang, PM, Secretary
mkorang@comcast.net



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, September 8, 2007 at the Union Lodge No. 19, 60 Cedar Ave., North Brunswick, 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
- 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 S. Ryan
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(Continued from page 3)

No one doubts that “left hand first” would result in a smoother ceremony. The only question is when, how, and why did the current “right hand first” doctrine originate. That it is someone’s innovation is plainly the case, but as regards further particulars, I am afraid I do not know. Perhaps some other knowledgeable brother could inform us. No reason is given in DLI’s, although it is mentioned that all four points of the OB posture are touched in designated order after the candidate is in position in order to emphasize those four points. This strikes me as an eminently sensible procedure, even if the order is a little off. It may even be that the “right hand first” rule evolved from this, where instead of touching each point after the posture is perfected, someone thought it would be a good idea to adjust those points of posture in that order. The choice of right hand first probably had to do with a desire to emphasize the symbolism of fidelity in that situation, as much as the desire to impose some rule, any rule, to govern the situation. I see nothing wrong with having such a rule, but perhaps we ought to revise it so that we do left first for EA, and right first for FC, which keeps closer to the degree symbolism, as well as producing a smoother, and more impressive ritual.

From the Secretary's Desk...

To all concerned brethren....due to the change in our By-Laws moving our Annual Meeting to Decemehr, the WM has decreed that Dues for 2007 have been paid and will not be due until 2008. Dues notices will be sent out in October for the 2008 year. Even though your dues card may say good through May 2007, it is actually good through 2007.

From The West

Bro. Ben Hoff, Senior Warden

One of the hallmarks of excellence in ritual performance, as I am sure all would agree, is smooth and graceful movement to complement the spoken work. In my opinion, it is especially important in the handling of candidates to convey a sense of smooth and confident flow, which in his experience will reinforce the message to the candidate that the ceremonies should be taken seriously. We practice the ceremonies in order to perfect a certain level of excellence. In order to help keep the choreography straight, we have invented a number of supposedly iron-clad rules of movement, following the peculiar Masonic tendency to attempt to reduce everything a rule.

But the rules are not iron-clad. We sacrifice the rules when they get in the way of the larger objective of smooth and graceful ritual performance. So we always ground before speaking – except in certain cases. We carry rods at the right – except when we don’t. The list goes on and on. There are times, however, when we sacrifice excellence in ritual to maintain some arbitrary rule that we have made up. For example, we insist the SD carry his rod while tying an apron on an initiate (which originally was the Master’s or Warden’s job) or when attending the Altar (which in other places is the job of the Chaplain, Marshal, Immediate Past Master, or SD without his rod).

One particular area where the ritual actually suffers because of insistence on an arbitrary rule is the “right hand first” rule when positioning an EA candidate to take his OB. Not only does the resultant fumbling at the altar detract from the Candidate’s experience, it is contrary to historic and most current worldwide Masonic practice, and even violates the symbolism of the EA degree. That “left hand first” was the old practice is clear from the Edinburgh Register House Manuscript, as well as several other similar documents from the pre-grand lodge period. The ERH describes the ceremony thus: “you make him take up the bible and laying his right hand on it you are to conjure him, to secrecy”. Notice that the candidate must “take up” the Bible first, which can only be with this left hand, since afterwards he puts his right hand on it. His usage is also preserved in our own lectures and descriptions, where it is always explained as “left hand supporting, and right hand resting on”. Again, the left hand is always mentioned first. Those who have traveled in foreign jurisdictions know that in other places, including Scotland, it is always left hand first. From a symbolic point of view, the entire symbolism of the EA degree is concerned with “left” rather than “right”. We have left foot, left knee, and left breast all for the symbolic reasons given in the EA lecture. Finally, from a purely mechanical perspective – which perspective governs the fluidity of physical movements, it makes no more sense to do right hand first, than to position the right knee before kneeling on the left knee.

(Continued on page 6)

From The South

Bro. Raymond C. Thorne, JW

In the last trestleboard I asked why the ruffians wanted to go to Ethiopia. I got some interesting responses and had planned to discuss them in this trestleboard. But the calendar suggests I talk about something else this time.

Jacques De Molay joined the Knights Templar in 1265, presumably at age 21 which would mean he was born in 1243 or 1244 in Molay, France. Little is known of his activity in the Order until 1298, when he became Grand Master. He was then at least 54, already older than most people in the world at that time.

At the start of the 14th century King Philip IV was poor, as was his kingdom of France. Over the years, the Knights Templar as an order had amassed a very large fortune and was answerable only to the Pope. The king, known as Philip the Fair for his light hair, coveted the Templar fortune. Philip first tried to get the money by joining the Order. As a widower, Philip was eligible to join the Templars, but was told he would have to give up his throne. This he found unacceptable, so in 1305 he turned to the new pope, Clement V, a fellow Frenchman.

Two years later Clement summoned De Molay from the Templar headquarters in Cyprus to the Apostolic See in Avignon, France, on the pretext of discussing the possible merger of the Templars and the Knights of Malta. De Molay resisted. He did agree to conduct a study of the order's moral condition. Perhaps by granting this study, Clement knew would hold at bay Philip's efforts to arrest the Grand Master, institute proceedings against the order and confiscate the Templar wealth. But this turned out to be only a delaying effort.

On October 13, 1307, in one of the greatest mass arrests in history, fifteen thousand Knights Templar in France, including 63-year-old Jacques De Molay, were captured and imprisoned. Fifteen thousand all in one day. Talk about planning and secrecy. The date was a Friday and there are those who claim this was the origin of the superstition of Friday the 13th being unlucky.

Under torture, De Molay confessed to personal sins and incorrect actions of his order--whether real or not. But try as the Inquisition might, in the six and a half years De Molay was imprisoned, he never revealed the location of any Templar money or betrayed his comrades.

De Molay's arrest was seven hundred years ago come October, yet his arrest and subsequent tortures, trials, confessions, retractions, and execution are all the stuff of legends (sometimes contradictory) that still sell books today, as well as form the basis of Masonic-related rituals.

I sometimes wonder if De Molay's idealized virtues--such as virtuous conduct, piety, and fidelity to a trust, not to mention his unjust execution at failing to divulge an important secret--have been incorporated into a hero of another Masonic legend.



The Article Formerly Known As Back Page Book Review Bro. Jay Hochberg

“The Element Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Hidden History”

by John Michael Greer

Barnes & Noble Books, 2006, 694 pp.

Must admit I rolled my prejudiced eyes upon spotting the title, with its “Secret Societies” recalling a library's worth of lame books repackaging the same tired nonsense about Masonry, the Illuminati, Skull and Bones, etc. A second glance, assessing the original cover art and the sheer heft of this text suggested there was more to explore. A perfectly appropriate doubletake, if I may say so, given the subject matter!

This is one among a series of Element Encyclopedias on various arcane subjects, and while it is not devoted to Freemasonry exclusively, it is almost impossible to turn a page without arriving at an entry that defines some aspect of the Craft. Our author is Bro. John Michael Greer of Ashland Lodge in Oregon, who obviously is an authority on the subject of private organizations — be they social, political, religious, fraternal, occult, scientific, artistic, revolutionary or criminal — and their histories, purposes, rituals and significance. No wonder it's the size of a biology textbook.

For me the test is whether a book can teach me about a subject that has eluded me. After reading about Martinists, Hermeticists, Alchemists and Rosicrucians in other reference books, I never gained insight into just what it is that they believe and do, so preoccupied were those writers with the exotic people and places of those groups' stories. But thanks to Bro. Greer's encyclopedia, we have an understandable interpretation of those traditions, with cross references to unveil more hidden knowledge.

What about Masonry, you say? I cannot imagine any simple or trick question that can't be answered here. From the basics, like what is a Lodge, to how did Crowley, Yarker, Pike, Von Hund and other complicated personalities affect Masonry are discussed in appropriate detail. Masonry's extended family of far-flung rites, orders, jurisdictions and appendages are calmly defined in context.

Did you know an English Mason named Archer founded the Royal Oriental Order of the Sat B'hai in 1871 and protected it from his brother Masons with a disinformation campaign? Thanks to Bro. Greer, you do now. A very interesting and informative read.

