

# The Lamplight

**The Quarterly Newsletter of  
the Chancellor Robert R Livingston  
Masonic Library of the Grand Lodge of New York**  
[nymasoniclibrary.org](http://nymasoniclibrary.org)  
**(212) 337-6620**

Spring 2021

*Welcome to the first edition of **The Lamplight**, the newsletter of the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge. The Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library serves as the central research library of the Grand Lodge of New York. The Mission of the Library is to collect, preserve, interpret, and support the research and education for a community of scholars, including Freemasons, academics, undergraduate and graduate students, and the general public. Our institution features the foremost collections of the history, philosophy, culture and organization of American and International Freemasonry, with an emphasis on Freemasonry in New York State.*

## **From our Grand Master:**

Welcome to a “reboot” of a newsletter from your Library.

I say reboot since many newsletters over the years were sent on printed material through the mail. In almost all instances they gradually faded due to cost. But here we are today in the digital world with a rebirth of many of these former publications.

Your Library continues to evolve by providing services through technology. I, like most, still enjoy holding a book or a newspaper. While you can still do that, the library staff and Trustees are making additional information available for your convenience. From books to enjoy to reading courses to webinars.

Your Chancellor Robert R Livingston Library has global recognition. That recognition is due to the dedication of our Trustees, Staff and of course, to your support.

I hope you enjoy this issue. If you are like me, I look forward to their next innovation.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

M. .W. . William M. Sardone  
Grand Master

## From the Director

Welcome to the first issue of **The Lamplight**, the newsletter of the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge.

As the Library enters 2021, we continue to deal with the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In line with safety guidelines promulgated by the state and city, we, and all Grand Lodge Staff are limiting our in-office presence. All staff will be spending at least some days working from home.

For those interested in understanding how this new reality affects members' in person use of the Library facility, please visit the Library website [nymasoniclibrary.org](http://nymasoniclibrary.org). Even though I will only be working on-site every Monday, the Library will still be receiving mail, including book returns from patrons, but I will not be sending out books to patrons until further notice. Please email me at [Avastola@nymasoniclibrary.org](mailto:Avastola@nymasoniclibrary.org) if you have any questions or concerns. Our librarian, Joseph Patzner, will be working on-site on Thursdays to answer patron research questions (email: [Jpatzner@nyasoniclibrary.org](mailto:Jpatzner@nyasoniclibrary.org)).

We have put together some very interesting content for you in this newsletter. It includes information about our upcoming virtual lecture for March 25, 2021, an article about the meaning of Cornerstones in Freemasonry, and a review of a new book about Freemasonry and the visual arts. Stay tuned for the next issue of **The Lamplight** e-newsletter, which will be circulated in the Summer of 2021.

Fraternally yours,  
Bro. Alexander Vastola, Director

## From the Library Trustees:

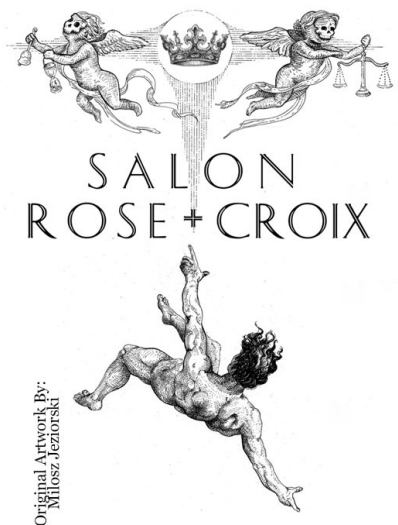
Your Grand Lodge never stops! Even though we haven't been able to meet together, the Livingston Library Trustees have had a busy 2020. The most exciting product is the document you're reading right now. The revival of a regular newsletter is a great satisfaction both to Library Staff and the special Trustee committee that worked so hard to put it in place. They deserve our collective thanks.

The Trustees also pitched in for the project of relocating the Utica Library from its former home on the Masonic Care Community Campus, to new spaces in the Utica Masonic Temple and the Fraternity's new campus at the former College of New Rochelle. There has been much work done at the Utica site, led by Library volunteer W. Daniel Williams. Work at the New Rochelle Campus will begin in earnest when safe and frequent travel schedules are restored. The New Rochelle Campus is a treasure, and the Library Trustees are thankful to the Masonic Hall and Home Trustees for setting aside ample space there for Library artifacts, books and artwork. I hope in the course of the next year, you will all make a point to visit us there.

Thank you all for your continued interest and support through this difficult period. See you around the reading rooms soon!

R. W. Steve King, President  
Livingston Library Board of Trustees

# Virtual Lecture Announcement



Virtual Lecture  
The 3rd SALON DE LA  
ROSE+CROIX

Featuring:  
Tony Crisos  
Adina Dabija  
Milosz Jeziorski

Thursday March 25, 2021  
7:00PM

We invite everyone to join us on Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 7:00 PM for the third installment of The Salon de La Rose + Croix. The modern iteration of The Salon de La Rose + Croix is a tradition founded by Bro. Tony Crisos featuring an evening of lecture, music, and art. This installment will feature a lecture by Bro. Tony Crisos, followed by a reading of two original poems by Adina Dabija, and ending with a presentation from the graphic artist Milosz Jeziorski.

To RSVP to the lecture visit [bit.ly/Marchlecture](https://bit.ly/Marchlecture)

*Thank you to the 4th Manhattan District Square Club for their sponsorship  
of our lecture series!*

## Upcoming Virtual Library Lectures:

April 29, 2021: Ivan Boularte: Pre-Columbian Builders (based on Joseph Newton's book "The Builders") Development of Architecture and Agriculture in the new world before the arrival of Europeans

May 28, 2021: Karen Quinones: "Theodosia Burr: Teen Eyewitness to the Founding of the New Nation"

June 24, 2021: Keith Marshall Jones, III: "John Laurance, the Immigrant Founding Father America Never Knew"

## Ebooks Service Now Available

### From the Librarian:

After a lengthy research and development effort, we're happy to announce the launch of an on-line digital library. The new program became effective March 1, 2021. The new system will allow patrons to borrow and enjoy the digital versions of select Reading Course books and other library materials as PDF and ePub documents from their e-reader, phone, tablet, or computer. This service will reduce long waits for books from our most popular courses, allowing patrons to more easily pursue their personal Masonic education.

Patrons will be able to check out up to three books at a time. The books will be accessible online for 21 days, and are returned automatically at the end of the loan period.

For more information on registration for and use of the on-line application, visit [Nymasoniclibrary.org/digital-library](http://Nymasoniclibrary.org/digital-library)

Sincerely,  
Joseph Patzner  
Librarian

## Staff Spotlight

### A Series Introducing the Staff of the Library & Museum



Hi! I'm Christine Hesch, the Curator of the Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge of New York. I have a BA in History and Japanese from SUNY Albany and an MS in Library and Information Science from Pratt Institute.

My interests include World War II and Holocaust History, as well as improving use and access in libraries, and the preservation of art, objects, manuscripts, and photography. While the pandemic has limited my time in the physical library this year, I've been working with our Museum Technician, Ratirat Osiri, to grow our online Museum. We now have over 1,000 objects available to view online, which can be viewed by going to our website. When I am on-site, my current project is cataloging our vast collection of lantern slides, which will be used in a future exhibit in the Library's Reading Room. Although the pandemic has closed our doors to the public, the Livingston Masonic Library staff has been working on new ways for Masons and non-Masons to access our significant collection.

# **Featured Article: Proving the Stone: Freemasonry and the Laying of Cornerstones**

## **The Ancient Origin of the Cornerstone**

Cornerstones in buildings have existed in human history since ancient times. The ancient importance of cornerstones of buildings was due to a sacrifice. This sacrifice was first done to protect the building from enemies with the angry ghosts of the sacrifices (The modern use of the time capsule is related to the superstition that without a sacrifice, a building will fall, if there is not protective ghost to guard it.). This sacrifice was also performed to appease the gods: especially mother earth, due to the load of the building to be built upon her. In Africa, Borneo and Polynesia, the foundations of buildings were laid upon animal, bird, or human remains. This idea is even present in the Bible. In 1 Kings xvi: 34, we are told that when Hiel, the Bethelite, built Jerico: “He laid the foundations thereof in Abiram, his first born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son, Segub.” In time, the human sacrifice was replaced by an animal sacrifice, which was then replaced by an offering of the fruits of the earth. “The fruits of the earth” relates to the Hindu belief of when the spirit of a human sacrifice enters the body of an animal, the spirit of the animal, when sacrificed, enters the earth in which it is buried, and grows and lives again in the plants. Thus, corn, wine, and oil, - grain, grape, and olive – became in time symbols of the ancient, dreadful sacrificial rites.

The practice of the cornerstone laying dates to as early as the construction of buildings in ancient times. The Jewish historian Ezra mentions the rejoicing with music to praise the Lord at the laying of the cornerstone of the Second Temple: “And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.” The cornerstone in ancient times was the stone in an edifice that was a perfectly squared stone from which the remainder of the building could be plumbed, squared, and leveled. This provided the builder a point of departure which ensured that the structure would be properly built.

## **The First Cornerstone Laying Ceremonies by the Freemasons**

Some of the earliest research references to Freemasons being involved in a cornerstone ceremony was on June 21, 1675, when the laying of the footstone in St. Paul’s Cathedral was done with Masonic ceremonies. A second early reference to the laying of a cornerstone by a Masonic body appears in *Mist’s Weekly Journal*, of May 26, 1722, for the building of Saint Martin’s in the Field (London):

“That it being a royal parish church, King George I sent his Lord Almoner and Surveyor General attended by brother Gib (the architect of the grand pile), with many Freemasons in solemn procession from the palace to level the footstone of the southeast corner by giving it three great knocks with a mallet in the King’s name, and laying upon it a purse of one hundred guineas. When the trumpeters sounded all joined in joyful acclamations and the Craftsmen went to the Tavern to drink a toast to the King and the Craft.”

The first recorded formal and official Masonic cornerstone laying ceremony was that of the laying of the Foundation Stone of the New Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh by the Earl of Cromarty, Grand Master of Scottish Masons, on August 2, 1738. The description of this event was written sixty-six years later in 1804 by Alexander Lawrie in his *History of Free Masonry*. Lawrie describes a simple, almost primitive ceremony:

“When the company came to the ground, the Grand Master, and his brethren of the free and accepted Masons, surrounded the plan of the foundation hand in hand: and the Grand Master-Mason, along with the press [representatives] of the Managers of the Royal Infirmary, having come to the east corner of the foundation where the stone was to be laid, placed the same in its bed; and after the Right Honorable the Lord Provost had laid a medal under it each in their turns gave three strokes upon the stone with an iron mallet, which was succeeded by three clarions of the trumpet, three huzzas, and three claps of the hands.”

The practice of the Masonic cornerstone ceremony soon spread to America. For instance, it is believed that Brother Benjamin Franklin laid the cornerstone of Independence Hall in Philadelphia following 1732 when he was Grand Master of the Pennsylvania Grand Lodge.



## Famous Cornerstone Ceremonies (Done with Masonic Ceremonies)

Since the late 18th century, the Freemasons have laid the cornerstones to some of America's most prominent buildings. Some notable buildings that received Masonic cornerstone ceremonies were the White House, the U.S. Capitol Building and the Smithsonian Institution.



*The Freemasons have also laid many foundation stones for Masonic buildings in the State of New York. One example is shown in this panoramic photograph of the laying of the cornerstone of the Soldier's and Sailors' Memorial Hospital in Utica, New York, on September 20, 1919, located at the Masonic Home campus. (Courtesy of the Utica branch of The Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge)*

## Proving the Stone: The Masonic Cornerstone Ceremony

The entire Masonic cornerstone ceremony is an elaborate ritual. The Plumb, Square, and Level are used to prove the stone - in the Masonic cornerstone ceremony, the stone is checked, using ancient tools, to be certain it is square, plumb (straight), and level because a building constructed on a poor foundation is not strong. The Grand Master then “blesses,” the cornerstone by pouring corn (signifying grain), wine and oil. The corn, wine, and oil each have their own special symbolism. The Corn of Nourishment symbolizes health and heartiness of the workers. The Wine of Refreshment symbolizes plenty. The Oil of Joy symbolizes peace and joy. The Grand Master is asking that these benefits and blessings be bestowed upon the project and the people by the Great Architect of the Universe.

The procedure for the laying of a cornerstone with Masonic ceremonies was written down by the Masons as far back as the late 18th century. In 1797, Thomas Smith Webb published *The Freemason's Monitor*, his version of William Preston's 1772 *Illustrations of Masonry* adopted for American Masonry, and in his ritual shows the introduction of corn, wine, and oil, the tests of trueness of the stone, and the now almost universal approbation from the Grand Master that the stone is “well formed, true, and trusty.” The Grand Master strikes the stone three times with his Gavel, and states: “To the glory of God, the everlasting Father, the Great Architect of the Universe! This cornerstone having been duly tested by the ancient implements of Freemasonry, I declare it to be well formed, true and trusty, and laid in ample form.”



*(Top) The ivory-handled ceremonial baton used for the laying of the cornerstone of Cleopatra's Needle in Central Park from the museum collection of the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge.*

*(Bottom) Here is a close-up view of the hieroglyphics on the Egyptian obelisk that adorns the top of the ceremonial baton.*

## **Artifacts from the Cornerstone Laying Ceremony**

The Freemasons have a tradition of creating objects to use in the cornerstone laying ceremony that are often elaborately decorated to reflect the ceremony they were used for. For instance, here are images of the ivory and amethyst baton commemorating the arrival of the obelisk called Cleopatra's Needle from Alexandria, Egypt to Central Park, New York City, from our Museum's collection. This baton was used at the obelisk's cornerstone-laying ceremony and was presented to the Marshal of the Day, R . . W . . Edward M. L. Ehlers by Mr. William Henry Hurlbert, editor of the newspaper The New York World. The baton is topped with a small obelisk engraved with hieroglyphics. Engraved silver trowels were also sometimes used in the ceremony by the Grand Master to spread the cement.

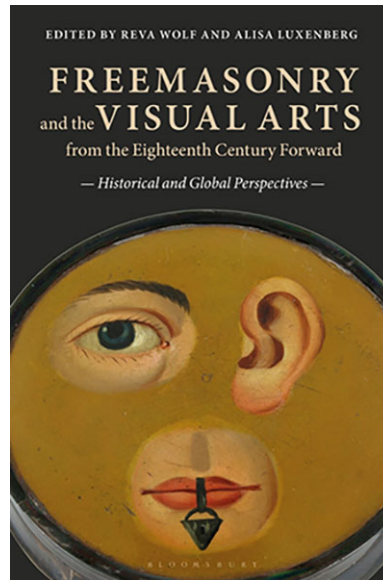
By tracing the significance of the cornerstone from antiquity to modern times, it is clear that it has a certain degree of importance, especially to the Freemasons. Laying a cornerstone is one of the few times in Masonic ritual where the speculative Masons of today, can act like the operative Masons of yesterday. By laying cornerstones, the Freemasons have shown that they both desire and take great pride in helping to lay the foundation upon which all good institutions of society are built.

## Book Review

by Alexander Vastola

### *Freemasonry and the Visual Arts from the Eighteenth Century Forward—Historical and Global Perspectives*

Edited by Reva Wolf and Alisa Luxenberg; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020;  
262 pages, + i-xviii, Selected Bibliography, Index



Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020

What is the iconography of the symbols of Freemasonry? The symbols used by the Freemasons have meanings that are well-known to those who have been initiated into the brotherhood of the Freemasons. The square and compasses, the all-seeing eye, the Masonic working tools, and other symbols are used to teach Masons advancing through the three degrees of Masonry the values and morality that the Craft expects new Masons to uphold. However, is the iconography of the symbols of Freemasonry only understandable through a purely Masonic lens of analysis? Or, can the symbols of Freemasonry be understood through an art-historical lens as well?

In *Freemasonry and the Visual Arts from the Eighteenth Century Forward—Historical and Global Perspectives*, scholars Reva Wolf and Alisa Luxenberg have put together a very interesting lineup of scholarly articles that attempt to analyze the symbols of Freemasonry through an art-historical means of analysis, rather than looking at the symbols of Masonry through a purely historical lens.

In the introduction, the editors of this book do a great job of setting the stage for their discussion of how Freemasonry is related to the visual arts. They give an overview of Freemasonry's supposed origins in England and how it began to spread to France and the rest of the world. Also, they note the difficulties of interpreting Masonic symbols: that it is difficult to determine a symbol's "Masonic significance" because Freemasonry used a vast collection of symbols already in existence whose meanings changed in different contexts or historical developments (page 13). Adding to the difficulties of an art historical analysis of Masonic symbols is the "secrecy" of Freemasonry's membership, rituals, and even buildings (page 16).



In a series of eleven well-researched articles, the editors of this book aim to reveal a worldview of the relationship between Freemasonry and the visual arts and how they have “reinforced” each other in the past three hundred years, showing readers how to read this symbolism and encouraging future scholarship in this field (page 17). Overall, after reading this engaging collection of scholarly essays, I believe that this book largely accomplishes this aim. The editors give this volume a worldview of scholarship about Freemasonry and the visual arts through the diversity of its content.

The book has articles discussing Freemasonry and the visual arts in diverse locations. While there are articles on American Freemasonry (for example, articles discussing Masonic symbols in the 18th century Boston portraiture of John Singleton Copley or the Masonic symbolism of Masonic Temples made to look like King Solomon’s Temple); there are also articles that discuss Freemasonry and the visual arts in countries not as well-known for having Freemasonry. These countries include Iran, India, and Haiti (for instance, articles discussing Masonic symbolism in Persian Revival architecture in India and Iran, and the Masonic symbolism in Haitian Voodoo culture). This diversity in locations helps to show the reader the extent to which Freemasonry and the visual arts can be analyzed around the world.

The editors have also compiled articles in this volume that discuss a diverse range of different types of art. Urban planning and architecture is discussed (Freemasonry in Eighteenth Century Portugal and the Architectural Project of the Marquis of Pombal, by David Martín López; Freemasonry and the Architecture of the Persian Revival, 1843-1933, by Talinn Grigor; and Solomon’s Temple in America: Masonic Architecture, Biblical Imagery, and Popular Culture, 1865-1930, by William D. Moore). In addition, there are articles that discuss porcelain (The Order of the Pug and Meissen Porcelain: Myth and History, by Cordula Bischoff), drawings (Goya and Freemasonry: Travels, Letters, Friends, by Reva Wolf), painted portraiture (Freemasonry’s “Living Stones” and the Boston Portraiture of John Singleton Copley, by David Bjelajac), printed illustrated Lodge documents (The Visual Arts of Freemasonry as Practiced “Within the Compass of Good Citizens” by Paul Revere, by Nan Wolverton), lithographs (Building Codes for Masonic Viewers in Baron Taylor’s Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l’ancienne France , by Alisa Luxenberg), Masonic jewels (Freemasonry and the Art Workers’ Guild: The Arts Lodge No. 2751, 1899-1935, by Martin Cherry), photography (Picturing Black Freemasons from Emancipation to the 1990s, by Cheryl Finley and Deborah Willis), and Masonic symbolism in the rituals, banners, and altars of Haitian Voodoo (Saint Jean Baptiste, Haitian Voodoo, and the Masonic Imaginary, by Katherine Smith). This varied lineup of scholarly articles does a good job of showing the reader the wide range of different forms of the visual arts in which the symbolism of Freemasonry has a presence.

In addition, this book has other strengths. For example, the articles are arranged chronologically, which made it easier to see how the symbolism of Freemasonry evolved and was employed in the visual arts during different periods over the last three centuries. Furthermore, this book has a lengthy bibliography on Freemasonry and the visual arts, which could be used by scholars who wish to pursue further research in this field.

In all, this book is a great read for those interested in pursuing further research in this fascinating new area of Masonic art historical scholarship.

## **To Our Loyal Patrons**

We hope you will continue to support the work of the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge. Donations can be made in the form of checks made out to “Livingston Masonic Library” and sent to our mailing address below. Another way to donate is through the Brotherhood Fund Campaign portal on the Grand Lodge web page (<https://nymasons.org/>). We appreciate your help in supporting our mission to advance the understanding of, and appreciation for, Masonic history and culture in New York State.

Thanks!

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