

The Lamplight

The Quarterly Newsletter
of the Chancellor Robert R Livingston
Masonic Library of the Grand Lodge of New York
nymasoniclibrary.org
(212) 337-6619

Spring 2022

Mission Statement

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 the Director

The Library & Museum continues to operate with limited on-site hours of operation and specific guidelines in place for visitors and researchers. These guidelines are found at: <https://nymasoniclibrary.org/re-opening/>.

The Library & Museum staff continues to work on various projects. Ratirat Osiri, Museum Technician, continues to work on re-housing the artifacts in the Museum collection into archival storage containers. Joseph Patzner, Librarian, has added Masonic periodicals to the Odilo e-resources platform, and is currently working on digital versions of the New York Grand Lodge Proceedings.

Concerning my own work, I continue to focus on consolidating the Library's archival collections. For example, I am working on re-housing the Grand Lodge correspondence. These letters are from the 1780s-1890s and relate to the development of the Grand Lodge of New York. Some of the letters are written and signed by very prominent New York Masons, such as Chancellor Robert R Livingston and DeWitt Clinton.

Stay tuned for the next issue of *The Lamplight*, which will be circulated in the Summer.

Fraternally yours,

Bro. Alexander Vastola, Director

From the Library Trustees

This issue is our fifth quarterly publication of *The Lamplight*. We have all learned a great deal about the newsletter business over the past year, and our efforts have brought improvement both in format and content, issue by issue. My thanks go out to all of those who have offered suggestions for how *The Lamplight* could better serve you, our audience. I hope our product has lived up to those suggestions. We will strive to assure that next year's effort upholds the same trajectory.

Many new products and services have come to fruition in the past year, the online book portal, and a partnership to host the proceedings of the American Lodge of Research being the two most prominent. We all owe a debt of gratitude for the hard work of your Trustees and Library staff in making these, and other initiatives, come to pass. I know that a year from now, I will be able to report on every new way we have found to bring the Livingston Library to you.

I must note the efforts of two of our most inveterate researchers: R. W. Brother E. Oscar Alleyne and R. W. C. F. William Maurer. Brother Alleyne was recently elected president of The Masonic Society, an institution that recognizes Masonic research and scholarship. Our own Library Trustee and First Vice President, Brother Maurer, was elected a Fellow of the Society. Well done, Brothers! We know you will both continue to spread the Light.

Until we meet again through our summer issue of *The Lamplight*, I remain

Cordially and fraternally yours,

R. W. Stephen S. King

President, Livingston Masonic Library Board of Trustees

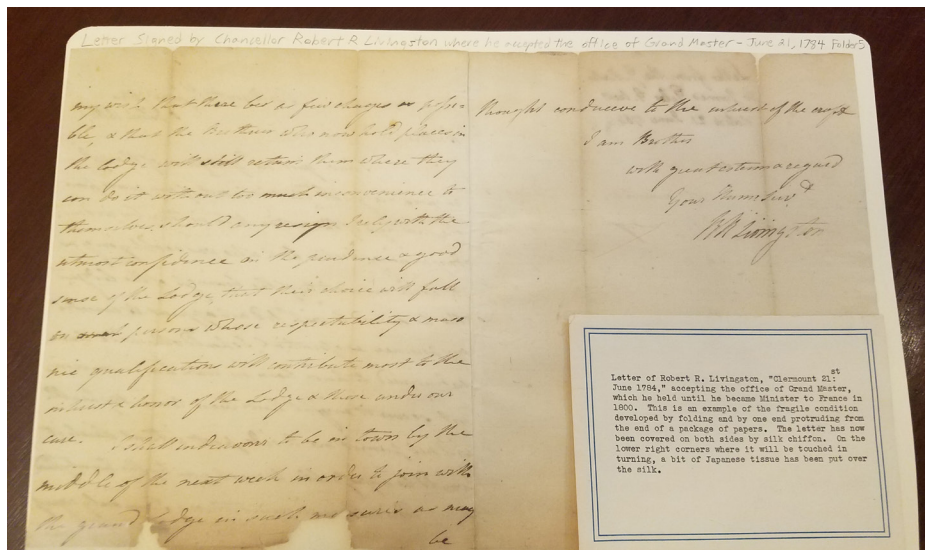
Re-Housing the Grand Lodge of New York Correspondence Collection By Alexander Vastola, Director

For 2022, one of my goals is to improve upon the organization and storage of the Library's vast archival collections. One such example is the correspondence of the Grand Lodge of New York. This collection was discovered in 2021 and has letters that reveal the history and development of the Grand Lodge of New York. From 1780 until the late 19th century, the Grand Lodge collected correspondence that came to the Grand Lodge of New York from their Grand Lodge Officers (some of them the most prominent men of their time) and from other Grand Jurisdictions, both in the United States and abroad.

The correspondence in this collection covered a variety of subjects. In addition to recording the activities of the Grand Lodge of New York from 1780 to the 1870s, there are also letters that reveal the activities of other Masonic organizations, such as the "schismatic" New York "Country" and "City" Grand Lodges of the 1820s, the Masonic Hall & Asylum Fund, and the 1870 cornerstone ceremony of the New York Masonic Temple. Furthermore, there are letters that detail how the Grand Lodge of New York founded Masonic lodges in areas outside of New York, such as in the British Colony of Demerara (in present-day Guyana), and Michigan Territory (present-day Michigan and Wisconsin).

There are several letters in this collection written and signed by prominent New York Masons. For example, four letters in the collection are signed by Mason and Governor of New York DeWitt Clinton, as well as an 1821 letter from Vice President of the United States and Grand Master Daniel D. Tompkins. However, the most significant document found in the collection so far is a letter signed by Chancellor Robert R. Livingston in 1784 (see picture below), writing from his estate "Clermont," where he accepts his election as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York.

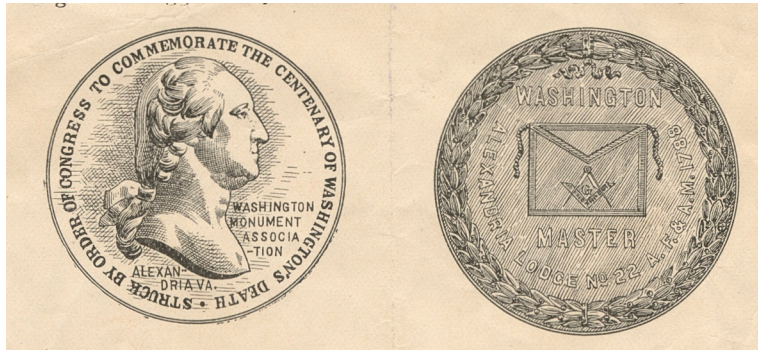
The work to re-house this collection of letters in acid-free buffered stock archival boxes and folders began in December of 2021, and it is expected that this work will be done by the end of 2022. This project will also include creating a basic finding aid for this collection. In future editions of *The Lamplight*, there will be more updates on these significant discoveries.



Back of the 1784 letter that has the signature of Chancellor Livingston

The US Congress' Masonic Medal By Ratirat Osiri, Museum Technician

The Museum collection has potentially the only Masonic medal ever issued by the US Congress. To commemorate the centennial of the death of George Washington in 1899, the US Congress issued four commemorative medals to fund the Washington Monument Association in 1902 to erect what it claimed to be the only George Washington statue as a citizen. It was not until 1904 that the medal was struck in silver and bronze at the Philadelphia, PA, mint.



A sketch of the Masonic variant of the George Washington medal

The collection features George Washington on the obverse with four reverse variants; Surveyor variant, Firemen variant, Husbandry variant, and Masonic variant. The four medals reflected his life and time as a citizen in Virginia, where he spent his career as a surveyor, a fireman, and a farmer, and served as the Master of his Masonic Lodge.



The Masonic variant of the George Washington medal

The reverse of the Masonic variant displays a Masonic apron with a square and compasses and the inscription of Alexandria Lodge No.22 of Virginia, the Lodge that he was the Master of in 1788. This Masonic design was suggested by a committee consisting of lodge officers from lodges in Alexandria, VA. This could also suggest that George Washington's strong connection with the Freemasons was still widely acknowledged back in that time.

**Digitally Available: Grand Lodge of New York Proceedings
By Joseph Patzner, Librarian**

On behalf of the Grand Lodge of New York, the Grand Secretary, the Trustees, and the Staff of the Robert R Livingston Masonic Library, we are excited to further the mission of the Library in preserving and supporting research in Freemasonry by announcing that the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York are now available digitally on Odilo (the Library's digital platform).

In my five-years since starting at the Library, I often refer to the proceedings when I am searching for information for patron requests or to simply learn more about the vast history of the Grand Lodge and the history of the Library. The hope is that by providing digital access, we will enhance research possibilities for Masons unable to visit our physical location. This will also help to preserve the original copies of the proceedings, some of which have deteriorated with age.

If you would like to access the digital proceedings, registered Library patrons can visit nymasoniclibrary.odilo.us/ and log-in using your Odilo UserID and password. If you are not registered or would like to check your registration status, please e-mail Jpatzner@nymasoniclibrary.org

2022 Virtual Library Lectures:

Thursday, March 31 – “Sicilian Builders: Beyond Roman and Etruscans”, Ivan Boluarte

Thursday, May 26 – “Brother Thomas Smith Webb and his Contribution to Freemasonry”, Tom Jordan

Thursday, June 30 – “Astro-theology”, Micah Dank

Thursday, September 29 – Curator's Lecture: “The Masonic Regalia of Simon Bolivar”, Alexander Vastola

Thursday, October 27 – “The History of the 4th Manhattan Masonic District”, Philippe R. Hiolle

Thank you to the 4th Manhattan District Square Club for their sponsorship of the Virtual Library Lectures!

New Acquisitions
By Alexander Vastola, Director

A Deserving Brother: George Washington and Freemasonry

By Mark A. Tabbert

University of Virginia Press, 2022

304 pages

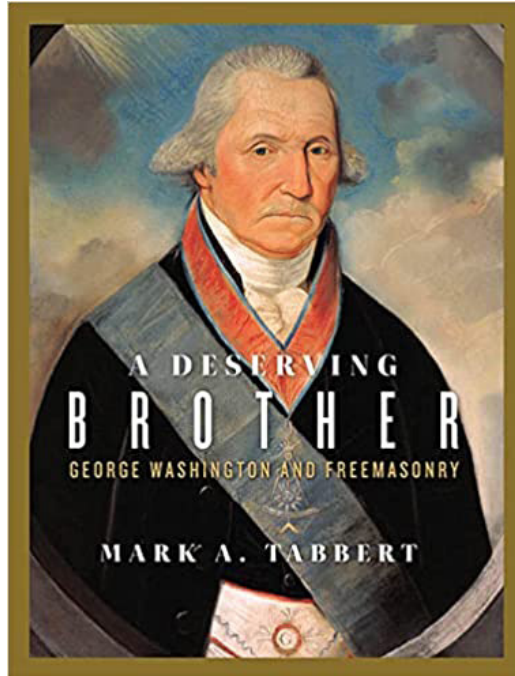


Image Courtesy of Courtesy University of Virginia Press

Many people know that George Washington was a prominent Freemason. However, in this book, Mark A. Tabbert strives to examine both Washington's ties to the Masonic fraternity and the role the Masons played in his life. This book is more than a conventional history of George Washington's Masonic involvement. Tabbert uses color images of artifacts to help illustrate and contextualize his historical analysis of Washington's association with the Freemasons, both adding to existing knowledge about Washington as a Freemason and helping to debunk some of the myths. Tabbert consulted the museum and archival collections of the Library of Congress, Mount Vernon, and Masonic Lodge records. In my opinion, to date, *A Deserving Brother* is the most comprehensive illustrated historical analysis of George Washington's connection to Freemasonry.

Notice About the Library's Odilo E-Resources Platform

The Livingston Masonic Library offers several Masonic books through Odilo, our new e-resources platform: <http://nymasoniclibrary.odilo.us/>. Email Joseph Patzner (Jpatzner@nymasoniclibrary.org) to set up an Odilo account.

Additional Library Resources

Masonic Reading Course

The Library offers 17 reading courses. Information about the Library's Masonic Reading Course is available at: <https://nymasoniclibrary.org/reading-course/>

Genealogy Research

The Library provides Masonic information on Master Masons, within the New York Grand Jurisdiction. Information about the Library's Masonic genealogy research services is available at: <https://nymasoniclibrary.org/research/>

Research Requests

For non-genealogy Masonic research requests, email Librarian, Joseph Patzner at: Jpatzner@nymasoniclibrary.org

To Our Loyal Patrons

We hope you continue to support our mission to advance the understanding and appreciation for, Masonic history and culture in New York State. There are two ways that donations can be made. First, checks can be made out to "Livingston Masonic Library" and sent to our mailing address below. The Second is through the Brotherhood Fund Campaign portal on the Grand Lodge webpage www.nymasons.org.

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