



The Lamplight

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

THE LAMPLIGHT WINTER 2023

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 Trustees of the Library

Brothers and friends of the Livingston Masonic Library,

Welcome to our Winter 2023 edition of *The Lamplight*! The holiday season always reminds me of the sense of gratitude we should have for the blessings accrued during the preceding twelve months. On a practical level, in my position as President of your Masonic Library, I am also reminded of the gratitude the Library Trustees and staff feel for the support we receive from across our Grand Jurisdiction. This support is pervasive and ongoing. We are very blessed to have Grand Lodge leaders who support us at every turn. We are fortunate to have a productive and cooperative relationship with the Trustees of the Masonic Hall and Home. Most of all, we are grateful for the many Freemasons across the State - indeed, around the world - who draw inspiration and education from our artifacts and literary collection, both in person at the Library proper and online through our digital collections and from the lecture series. It is a true pleasure for all of us to hear patrons express thanks for the pleasures our programs bring to them.

The end of any year reminds us that we will soon be taking up new challenges of a new cycle. If, like me, you believe our common mission in Freemasonry is an exciting opportunity for growth, I know you are looking forward to this new beginning. We know that surmounting each new challenge, no matter how difficult, will be seen in retrospect as one of those blessings that will fill our season of reflection, twelve months hence. On behalf of the Trustees and staff of your Livingston Masonic Library, I wish you all the best of what this wonderful season may bring to you and your families.

R.: W.: Stephen S. King
President, Livingston Masonic Library Board of Trustees

From the Executive Director

The Chancellor Robert R Livingston Library is abuzz with anticipation as it gears up to commemorate the upcoming centenary of a historic event: the chartering of the Grand Lodge of Finland by the Grand Lodge of the State of New York in 1924. This significant milestone in Masonic history holds a special place in the hearts of Freemasons worldwide, and the Library is diligently preparing to celebrate and educate.

To mark this 100-year anniversary, the Library is curating a special exhibition that will transport visitors back in time, exploring the intricate details of the events leading up to the chartering and the subsequent impact on Freemasonry in both Finland and New York. Rare documents, photographs, and artifacts from the Library's archives will be on display at the National Archive Building in Helsinki, Finland, offering a tangible connection to this pivotal moment. These items include an apron from the 19th Century and a First Edition *The Freemason's Monitor*, by Thomas Smith Webb, published 1797.

Why did Grand Lodge of New York assist in chartering the Grand Lodge of Finland? In short, lodges in Finland were present until 1822, when the Czar of Russia suppressed Freemasonry. In 1917, the Bolshevick Revolution liberated Finland. Shortly, thereafter, in 1922, eight U.S. Master Masons in Finland, petitioned the Grand Lodge of New York to charter a lodge in Helsinki; eventually, two more lodges followed. In the interest of further growing Freemasonry, in 1924, the Grand Lodge of New York chartered the Grand Lodge of Finland.

As a reminder, the Library is here to provide Masonic light and services to all within our Grand Jurisdiction. First, in-person [lectures](#) at Grand Lodge are currently ongoing. Second, I am available to present to lodges and districts. Third, our invaluable [Reading Course](#) is a free scholarly outlet, comprised of 17 courses - ranging from the historic to the esoteric. Some Reading Course materials can be accessed conveniently through [Odilo](#), our digital reading platform. Fourth, the [Masonic genealogy](#) research is popular among the Brethren.

If there are insights on how the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Library can better serve the Craft, I am only an email (mlarocco@nymasoniclibrary.org) or phone call away (212-337-6620).

Stay tuned for our next issue of *The Lamplight* in the Spring.

Fraternally Yours,

V. ∴ W. ∴ Michael LaRocco, Executive Director, Livingston Masonic Library

The Arts and the Craft: the Founding of St. Cecile Lodge No. 568

By Alexander Vastola, Director of Collections Services

St. Cecile Lodge No. 568 had the distinction of the first and only “daylight lodge” in existence in the Masonic fraternity for 37-years (1865-1902). It was important for the Freemasons of the artistic professions, who founded St. Cecile Lodge, to meet during the daytime since many of their work and performances were done during the evenings, making it difficult for these Freemasons to attend Masonic gatherings at night. Masons employed nocturnally in the theatre and newspaper professions had to get their Masonic degrees where they could. Interestingly, by 1907, outside the United States, Masonic meetings in the daytime had become more of a common practice. For example, in England, and especially in London, some lodges chose to begin their meetings in the morning (i.e., 9am) and continued their Masonic services into the evening, which culminated with a banquet.

St. Cecile Lodge was born out of the aftermath of the American Civil War. When Masons returned to New York City from the War and began to work as musicians and actors, they were disappointed to discover there were no fraternal lodges that held their meetings during the day, when employment obligations were not in conflict. As a result, several Masons discussed this problem at a meeting at a restaurant, led by a former professional musician. At this meeting, it was determined that they would attempt to form a daytime Masonic lodge.

At great length, the founders debated what to call their new lodge. Several lodge names were considered, including “Harmony Lodge,” “Melody Lodge,” and “Daylight Lodge.” They would eventually settle on the name of the patron saint of music and musicians, Saint Cecile (the French form of the name, instead of the traditional Latin form of this name, Saint Cecilia). The adoption of the French form of the Saint’s name, Saint Cecile, was also done to recognize the indispensable help of the Deputy Grand Master and his French-born wife, Mrs. Cecile Robir Holmes.

St. Cecile Lodge first met under dispensation on February 15, 1865, at 3:30 pm at the Masonic Hall on the corner of Broome and Crosby Streets in New York City, with W. Bro. Frederick Widdows serving as the Lodge’s first Master. The first business the Lodge decided was to meet every Tuesday at 3 pm, to set the initiation fee at \$50.

St. Cecile Lodge No. 568 received its charter on June 28, 1865. As the Lodge grew, its reputation and vitality started to attract candidates from diverse professional backgrounds, which including actors, newspapermen, producers, directors, theatre owners and managers, and stagehands. Harry Houdini, the famed escape artist, is counted among the rolls of St. Cecile Lodge.

The Library is still looking for volunteers to help with the New York Masonic Genealogy Project. If interested, please email Alexander Vastola at Avastola@nymasoniclibrary.org

A Look into the Early Grand Lodge Library and Museum

By Ratirat Osiri, Museum Technician

As I am working on the Grand Lodge's photograph collection, I have come across many vintage photos of the Grand Lodge's Library and Museum, taken almost a century ago. I am excited to share the glimpse of how our Library and Museum in yesteryear in this issue of *The Lamplight*.

Originally located on the first floor of the same building, the Library, as seen in the images below, was later relocated to 17th floor in the 1930s. "The Grand Lodge of New York Library and Museum" was the precursor of Robert R Livingston Library and was part of the Grand Lodge's Board of General Activities' operation. Other than the Library and Museum, the Grand Lodge of New York's Board of General Activities also provided wide array of support and services to the lodges and Brethren, such as lodge speakers, movie and a lantern slide projector, free educational booklets, and the *Masonic Outlook* magazine (the precursor of *Empire State Mason* magazine).



The Grand Lodge Library and Museum once covered the entire 17th floor. The philosophy of the exhibit display in earlier years was quite different from the modern-day standard practice. Then, every artifact deserved to be seen; there was an effort to display as many artifacts as possible in the cabinets and swing folders. Most of displays were dismantled upon the relocation to 14th floor in 1996. A handful of display cabinets survived and are still in use in the Library.



There were bookshelves and reading corners filled with Masons, enriching their knowledge on various fraternal topics. It was reported that during its peak, both the Library visitors and (reading) circulation reached 20,000 per year.



Above is the Library information desk, circa 1929. The telephone switchboard could be seen in the background, and the free educational booklet is observed on the left-hand side of the receptionist.



Directly above are the staff of the Board of General Activities, circa 1929. Specifically, being illustrated is the Information Bureau, which is similar to our present-day service - where staff receive questions regarding lodge directory, history, membership and artifacts. The major difference between then and now is the inquiries were all done manually. Before the internet and search engines, it was reported in 1928, the staff received, on average, nine questions a day.



This above photo is the only known group photo of the Board of General Activities staff of that time, circa 1929. Seated at the front was RW H. L. Haywood, editor in chief. The male staffs were identified as members of the Board. Unfortunately, the female staffs were not identified.

I am looking forward to continuing working on our unseen photograph collection and sharing more in the near future.

Notice About the Library's Odilo E-Resources Platform

The Livingston Masonic Library offers several Masonic books and periodicals through Odilo, our e-resource platform: <http://nymasoniclibrary.odilo.us/>.

To set up an Odilo account, email Alexander Vastola at: Avastola@nymasoniclibrary.org

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 Alexander Vastola at: Avastola@nymasoniclibrary.org

To Our Loyal Patrons

We hope you continue to support our mission to advance the understanding of, 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. Second is through the Brotherhood Fund Campaign portal on the Grand Lodge webpage (<https://www.nymasons.org/>).

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