



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 SPRING 2024

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,

When I recently gave a talk about the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Library, I said that a library is a very unlikely thing. People tend to think of libraries merely as collections of books. Our Library collection does indeed include books; but it is very easy today to get a book almost anywhere if that is all you are looking for. Every shopping mall has a bookstore of some kind. Every train station and airport have places where you can buy a paperback. Likewise, our local newsstands. And of course, we must not forget Amazon, the institution to which all other bookstores must secretly aspire. If you simply want to pass the time, or pick-up some light reading, these places are all you need.

Libraries, however, are much different from these places of convenience and popular entertainment. The trustees and staff of your Livingston Library know they have an important mission that goes well beyond entertainment and popular literature. That mission is to collect, curate and display the heritage, culture and values that are at the core of New York Freemasonry. We take great collective pride in unfolding these treasures to Brethren, researchers, and others from many parts of the world who have an interest in understanding what we are all about.

The words we hear early in our Masonic experience, “Friendship, Morality and Brotherly Love,” are the basis of the larger purposes of the Fraternity. These words, and the ideas which underlay them, and which give them reality, are found throughout our Ritual and are at the heart of the literature we have collected in our Library stacks. This commitment to sublime and all-encompassing ideals

places us in a line with those historical luminaries and thinkers who have worked for centuries to inculcate our civilizations with eternal concepts of goodness, truth, and wisdom, whether they orated about them in the academies of antiquity or spread their thinking through more modern literary modes. When people are thoughtful and passionate about these core human values, they are truly of one mind, no matter what their era. Freemasons stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

Please keep these thoughts in mind when you visit the Livingston Library reading rooms, use the Online Library or sign up for the Reading Course. Think of our collection as a unique store of intellectual and moral value from which you may draw at any time. The good thing about this store of value is that no matter how often you use it, no matter how much you take from it, its plenty and richness never diminish. They only grow with use. As will you grow richer in the using.

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

From the Executive Director

One of the latest artifacts restored within the Library and Museum collection is the largest Grand Lodge Sword. Unfortunately, given the current condition of the [Grand Lodge Sword](#), it has not been used in the opening and closing of the Annual Grand Lodge meeting for some time. This majestic sword has been fully restored and is ready for our upcoming Grand Lodge session, which will be in possession of the Grand Tiler, during opening and closing ceremonies. The two-century old artifact is something to behold. For the full history and restoration updates on the [Grand Lodge Sword](#), click the hyperlinks in this section.



I would like to remind everyone, when visiting the Library, appointments are only required for researchers needing access to materials. Also, the Library is hosting live lectures. If you have an interest in presenting at the Library or know someone who might, please contact me directly.

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 Summer.

Fraternally Yours,

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

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

From The 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

Fraternally Yours

Br. Alexander Vastola, Director of Collection Services

Grand Lodge of New York Photograph Collection: Rediscovering the Portraits of the Past Grand Masters

By Ratirat Osiri, Museum Technician

It has been almost a year since I have started working on the photograph collection. This massive collection of the photograph covers a wide range of topics and the Grand Lodge's timeline that I could share in The Lamplight newsletter for many issues to come. In the previous issue, I shared the photographs and the stories of our old Library on the 17th floor in the 1930s. In this issue, I am excited to share the unseen portraits of the Past Grand Masters of New York.

Working with the Grand Lodge's photograph collection, I have discovered the cabinet photograph of the Past Grand Masters from the mid-19th to the early 20th century. It was the time when photography became more popular and accessible. People would go to studios to have their portrait produced. Cabinet photographs also served as a keepsake or a token of friendship, and for present day, serves as an excellent visual resource.

While many were signed, some of them were previously unidentified in the collection, due to the lack of attribute of the photograph. To identify one, they must be compared with other visual references, such as engravings and/or portraits. For example, the photograph of MW William A. Brodie (1884) was identified by comparing his photograph with his engraving. Looking almost identical, it is safe to claim that his engraving was traced from this original photograph. The notable event of Grand Master Brodie was, he was the Grand Master who laid the cornerstone of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in 1884.



On the other hand, when comparing M.:W.: Clinton F. Paige's (1863-1864) photograph to his engraving, he looks like two different persons as they seem to be from the different stages of his life.



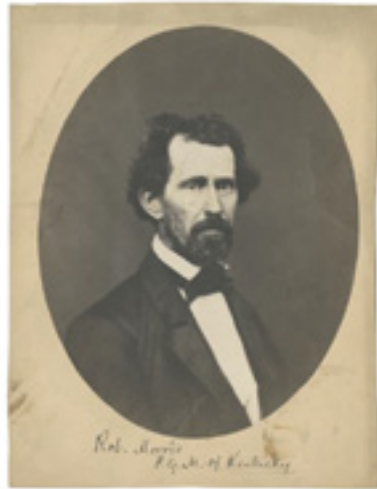
The other Grand Master who laid the cornerstone of New York City's landmark was M.:W.: Jesse B. Anthony (1880). He laid the cornerstone of the Egyptian Obelisk at Central Park in 1880.



The earliest Grand Master photograph I have come across is the one belonged to MW Finlay M. King (1862). You might notice the ink drawn on him as an attempt to make his face more visible.



I have also come across photograph of Grand Masters of other states as well. Also, the notable contributor of this Library and Museum, MW Rob Morris, was the Grand Master of Kentucky in 1858 and 1859.



The cabinet photographs of Grand Masters are available in the Library blog post and on the [Online Museum](#). Additionally, our collection staff has been compiling the visual resource of every Grand Masters of New York. Everyone is more than welcomed to reach out to us for the image resources of the Past Grand Masters.

Sincerely,

Ratirat Osiri, Curator, Livingston Masonic Library

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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