

MASONIC RESEARCH

Bro. Wallace McLeod is a member and Past Master of Mizpah Lodge #572, Toronto, Canada, and a member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge #2076, London, England, he is the Grand Historian of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario.

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Early attempts at Masonic research are traced and many familiar names of Masonic scholars who should be forever in our memory are mentioned. Those interested in Masonic research may contact MSA for our list "Masonic Research Lodges (U.S.)" -Editor

The Craft clearly has a number of different functions. It confers degrees. It conciliates friendship. It induces the habit of virtue. It ministers to the relief of want and sorrow. It encourages its members to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge.

I shall talk briefly about the last of these objectives, Masonic education. In the course of my remarks, I propose to pay tribute to a number of educators of the past and present, and mention some of the most important educational publications.

Research Bodies in England. There are Masonic research bodies that are not directly administered by Grand Lodges, but which can provide educational opportunities for our members. They are of two types: regularly warranted research lodges, and independent research societies.

Perhaps the earliest organization devoted to Masonic research was the Masonic Archaeological Institute, in London. The records are casual and sporadic, but evidently it was operating by June 1871, and its members included Charles Warren (1840-1927), who later, as Chief Commissioner of Police, would lead the investigation into the murders committed by Jack the Ripper in 1888. The Institute ceased to operate in 1873.

It seems that Quatuor Coronati Lodge, No. 2076, London, is the oldest research lodge that is still active. Its warrant is dated November 28, 1884, and its Transactions have been published every year since then. The charter members included the great Sir Charles Warren, whom we just mentioned. The membership is limited to forty at any one time, a number that has never been reached in 115 years. In fact, from the time of its foundation up to 1997, it has had only 179 members. They have included such great scholars as Robert Freke Gould (who lived 1836-1915), the founder of the "authentic" school of Masonic research; Bernard Jones (1879-1965), the author of the indispensable Freemason's Guide and Compendium (1950); Douglas Knoop (1883-1948), who collaborated with G. P. Jones and Douglas Hamer to put together The Early Masonic Catechisms (1953); Herbert Poole (1885-1951), who produced the revised edition of Gould's History of Freemasonry (1951); Fred L. Pick (1898-1966), the co-author (with G. Norman

Knight) of *The Pocket History of Freemasonry* (1953); Harry Carr (1900-1983), who visited Canada a number of times on lecture tours, and who wrote *The Freemason at Work* (1976). And the current members include such scholars as John M. Hamill and Robert A. Gilbert, the editors of the magnificent volume, *Freemasonry: A Celebration of the Craft* (1992).

As well, a few Canadians have been admitted as full members of the lodge, including our own John Ross Robertson (1841-1918), the author of *History of Freemasonry in Canada* (1900); Robert J. Meekren (1876-1963), the editor of *The Builder* magazine of the National Masonic Research Society of Iowa from 1925 to 1930; A. J. B. Milborne (1888-1976), who wrote *Freemasonry in the Province of Quebec* (1960); and Gerard Brett (1915-1968), Director of the Royal Ontario Museum, 1947-1955. (But of course any Mason can join the Correspondence Circle of Quatuor Coronati Lodge; the address is The Secretary, Q.C.C.C. Ltd., 60 Great Queen Street, London WC211 5BA, England). Since 1924, the lodge has sponsored the Prestonian Lectures, the only lectures that are given with the authority of the United Grand Lodge of England. These have been collected and published in four volumes so far. And every year since 1971 the lodge has offered the Norman B. Spencer Prize for the best essay submitted by a new scholar. Following the example of Quatuor Coronati, other research lodges were founded in Britain.

And more recently, late last year, the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre was established in London, "to provide support and to encourage research into the full spectrum of academic inquiry into Freemasonry," The Trustees include the Assistant Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England (Marquess of Northampton), and the Grand Secretary (James Daniel). The Centre has a website at <http://www.canonbury.ac.uk/>.

The Antipodes. With regard to research lodges in Australia and New Zealand, one should consult Tony Pope's paper, "On Australasian Lodges of Research," in *Masonic Challenges: The Transactions of the (Melbourne) Lodge of Research, No. 218*, for 1991. The first real research lodge down under, St. Alban, No. 38, in Adelaide, South Australia, was founded in December, 1889. It continues to thrive., but has not acted as a research lodge for fifty years. The oldest such body that has functioned continuously in that capacity is the Lodge of Research, No. 218, in Melbourne, Victoria, which was formed in 1911. In New Zealand apparently the oldest one is the Masters and Past Masters Lodge, No. 130, in Christchurch, which was warranted in 1902. There are over twenty research lodges in Australia and New Zealand that are still active. And that, to an outsider, seems like a very creditable number.

United States of America. North America was apparently much slower to recognize the value of such organizations. Actually, the earliest one seems to be the National Masonic Research Society, which was founded in Iowa in 1915; it published the superb magazine *The Builder* from 1915 to 1930.

The first actual research lodge in North America was apparently the North Carolina Lodge of Research, which was founded in 1931. It published a splendid set of transactions, called *Nocalore*, but ceased working in 1954. In its wake, a number of others were founded, one of the earliest being the American Lodge of Research in New York, likewise dating from 1931. This lodge confers the honorary title of Fellow upon notable Masonic scholars, and one of those so

recognized was the famous Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), who wrote the beautiful Masonic Ritual Music (Opus 113).

There are of course many other research groups. Actually, according to the latest revision of Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia (1996), in 1990 there were nearly fifty active research lodges in the United States. Many of them welcome subscribers from other jurisdictions, publish their transactions, and make books available to their members.

Canada. Our I country has not had very many such organizations. In 1915 a Lodge of Research was founded in Nova Scotia, with Reginald V. Harris as its leader and secretary; he later served as Grand Master (1932-1935) and then Grand Secretary (1945-1958) of -his Grand Lodge, and was given the honorary rank of Past Grand Master in Ontario (1938). He was co-author (with Ronald S. Longley) of *A Short History of Freemasonry in Nova Scotia* (1966). His research lodge kept working for at least ten years. The oldest surviving body of this sort is the Toronto Society for Masonic Research, which was founded in 1921, and which is still going strong, though with a fairly low profile.

The Canadian Masonic Research Association held its first meeting on May 9, 1950. Over the next quarter century, its members presented 116 papers, the last one being in May, 1976. (In 1986 these were collected and reprinted, in dime volumes, by the Heritage Lodge, under the direction of R. W. Bro. C. E. Balfour LeGresley). The Association included a number of notable Freemasons. We might mention Joseph R. Smallwood (1900-1991), who in 1949 was the Father of Confederation for Newfoundland. But as well there were a number of serious research scholars who belonged. The ones who delivered the greatest number of papers were Reginald V. Harris (who lived 1881-1968), the historian of Nova Scotia; A. J. B. Milborne, the historian of Quebec, whom we mentioned as a full member of Quatuor Coronati; and our own two brethren, John E. Taylor (1901-1984), recipient of the William Mercer Wilson Medal in 1977; and J. Lawrence Runnalls (1901-1994), who in 1975 was made an Honorary Past Grand Senior Warden for his work as editor of the *Grand Lodge Bulletin*, 1964--1975.

Very soon after the demise of the Canadian Masonic Research Association, the first research lodge in Ontario was formed. The Heritage Lodge, No. 730, was instituted on September 21, 1977, with V. W. Bro. (as he was then) Jacob Pos as the Master, and has been doing productive work ever since. Its main activity has been in the presentation of research papers at its regular meetings; more than eighty of these have appeared in the *Annual Proceedings* over the years. But as well it has engaged in a number of cognate projects: restoring the old Lodge Building in Black Creek Pioneer Village, near Toronto, and organizing a team of Masonic volunteers to serve as guides and interpreters; holding the annual Heritage Lodge Banquet; assisting in the restoration of noteworthy old Masonic gravestones (such as the William Mercer Wilson Monument at Simcoe, and "The Unknown Brother" at Jordan Station); and many others. Altogether, a record to be proud of! On the Internet, the Heritage Lodge has an excellent website at

<http://www.grandlodge.on.ca/heritage.htm>.

Philallethes Society. Of the various research bodies in the United States, the oldest one that is still working is the Philallethes Society. Its history was outlined in *Seekers of Truth* (1988), a book written by Allen E. Roberts to mark its sixtieth anniversary.

The Society was founded on October 1, 1928, by six men, in order to keep free thinkers in Masonry from being muzzled by those "dressed in a little brief authority." It is explicitly intended "for Masons who seek light or have light to impart." The name is a Greek word that means "Lover of Truth."

Over the years the Society increased its profile. In 1931 it decided to recognize certain Brethren by naming them Fellows of the Philallethes Society; the number of Fellows was set at forty. Over the years a total of 187 brethren have been honoured with this title. They include such people as Rudyard Kipling (who lived 1865-1936), who wrote a number of Masonic stories and poems; Carl H. Claudy (1879-1957), the author of *The Master's Book* (1935); Henry Wilson Coil (1885-1974), who compiled *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (1961; revised 1996); Alphonse Cerza (1905-1987), who wrote *Anti-Masonry* (1962); Dwight L. Smith (1909-1993), the author of *Whither are we Traveling?* (1962); Allen E. Roberts (1917-1997), who was probably "the most prolific author, perhaps in all of Masonic history," and whose books include *Key to Freemasonry's Growth* (1969); John J. Robinson (1925-1993), who wrote *A Pilgrim's Path* (1993); and Jerry Marsengill (1930-1991), the superb editor of several major Masonic magazines.

As well, a few Canadians have been honoured as Fellows of the Philallethes Society. They include Robert J. Meekren and Reginald V. Harris, whom we have already mentioned; Nathaniel W. J. Hayden (1871-1950), the first Librarian of our Grand Lodge Library, 1934-1949; and Charles E. Holmes (1880-1959), who became the first editor of the Montreal magazine, *Masonic Light*, in September, 1947.

The Philallethes magazine began publication in March, 1946. The first fifty years of the magazine are now available on a CD-ROM, which is very useful for purposes of research or reading. In February, 1956, the Society began to help sponsor a Workshop, as part of the meetings of the Allied Masonic Bodies in Washington. And that same year the first Certificate of Literature was awarded, for the best article published in the magazine. In 1980 the Society began to hold an "Annual Assembly and Feast" (a memorable phrase borrowed from Anderson's Constitutions of 1738). In 1981, for the first time, a Philallethes Lecturer was named, to present a talk at the Assembly and Feast. Since 1986 the Society has held a Semi-Annual meeting every year, in different cities. The Society has about forty-five local chapters, located in a number of countries. In 1992, to keep abreast of electronic communication, a dispensation was issued to Cornerstone Computer Chapter of the Philallethes Society, and the Chapter was granted a Charter in February 1993. The Society's website (now located at the address <http://freemasonry.org/psoc/>) was opened at the end of June, 1995, and has been very successful.