



THE LODGE GATE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF BILTMORE MASONIC LODGE

President William McKinley Honors Washington

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Those Darn Statistics

The United States Masonic Organizations made plans to commemorate George Washington on the 100th anniversary of his death on Dec. 14, 1899. They approached fellow Mason President William McKinley about speaking at the event. McKinley agreed to speak at the commemoration, to be held at Mount Vernon, but advised the organizers that his remarks were going to be brief because of pressing presidential business.

President McKinley long had held a great admiration for George Washington. The superintendent of Mount Vernon had reported in his 1897 annual report that McKinley had sent flowers to be placed on the tomb of Washington in May 1897.

The December 1899 visit to Mount Vernon was not McKinley's first visit to Washington's home. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association invited President and Mrs. McKinley to attend a reception during their May 1898 meeting. The president accepted the invitation and became the first president to visit Mount Vernon since Benjamin Harrison in 1890. President and Mrs. McKinley toured the house before attending the reception. Ida McKinley was so weak that she had to be carried from room to room during the tour.

There was a festive atmosphere in Washington, D.C., on Thursday,

Dec. 14, 1899. The city was full of Masons, their wives, family members, tourists and Masons from Canada and other countries commemorating the anniversary of the death of George Washington.

The day started at 8 a.m. with a military band leading the Masons in a mile-long parade down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Potomac River. There, the Masons and all others attending the commemoration then boarded boats to cross the Potomac to reach Mount Vernon. McKinley and his distinguished guests, including his cabinet, boarded arrived there at 11 a.m.

The presidential party made its way to the east side of the mansion, where a platform had been erected for the president to view the procession marching towards Washington's tomb. McKinley joined the procession that followed the exact route of Washington's funeral procession on Dec. 14, 1799. The first stop was at Washington's burial vault where he was first laid to rest. A Masonic burial ritual was performed there. The procession then proceeded to Washington's tomb for further ceremonies. The ceremonies at the tomb ended and the attendees made their way to the grass on the east side of

Washington's mansion. There the crowd waited to hear McKinley's eulogy.

McKinley began speaking to the crowd by paying homage to Washington as a Mason and how the Masonic values influenced Washington throughout his life.

McKinley concluded his remarks by saying the following: "While strong with his own generation, he is stronger even in the judgment of the lapse of the century he is better appreciated, more perfectly understood, more thoroughly venerated and loved than when he lived. He remains an ever-increasing influence for good in every part and sphere of the Republic. He is recognized as not only the most far-sighted statesman of his generation, but as having had almost prophetic vision. He built not alone for his time, but for the great future, and pointed the rightful solution of many of the problems, which were to arise in the years to come. The nation needs at this moment the help of his wise example. In dealing with vast responsibilities we turn to him. We invoke the counsel of his life and character and courage. We summon his precepts that we may keep his pledges to maintain justice and law, education and morality, the civil and religious liberty in every part of the country — the new as well as the old."



Pinocchio, A Masonic Story

When we think of the animated character Pinocchio we think of Walt Disney. Disney was an American animator, film producer, voice actor, and entrepreneur. A pioneer of the American animation industry, he introduced several developments in the production of cartoons. For those of us in the older generations we remember animated films such as Snow White, Dumbo, Fantasia, Bambi and of course Mickey Mouse. Today the Disney Corporation owns the Star Wars franchise.

He was a member of the Masonic youth organization DeMolay International but never a Freemason but did his association with this quasi-Masonic group have an impact on the story line of Pinocchio?

In the film Pinocchio, directed by Walt Disney, we can find an analogy with Freemasonry in the way they both address the topic of personal transformation and spiritual growth. In the film, Pinocchio is a wooden puppet who longs to become a real boy. To achieve this, he must overcome a series of tests and challenges that help him learn important lessons about honesty, responsibility and the value of making the right decisions. Similarly, in Freemasonry, members commit to following a path of self-knowledge and personal improvement, through rituals, symbolism and teachings, Freemasons seek to transform themselves into more virtuous and ethical individuals, working on

their spiritual and moral development. In both cases, both Pinocchio and the Freemasons face temptations and obstacles on their path to authenticity and wisdom. Pinocchio falls into the trap of lies and indulgence, while the Freemasons may face challenges in their daily lives that can test your integrity and Ma-



sonic values. In addition, both Pinocchio and the Freemasons find guides and mentors throughout their journey, in the film, Pinocchio is supported by the Blue Fairy and Talking Cricket, who guide him and encourage him to make correct decisions, similarly, In Freemasonry, Freemasons find support and guidance from their more experienced Freemason brothers, who help them on their path of personal and spiritual growth. Finally, both Pinocchio and the Freemasons seek to achieve a state of authenticity and transcendence. Pinocchio finds his true form as a boy by demonstrating his bravery and sacrifice for his father, while Freemasons

seek to achieve moral and spiritual perfection through the practice of Masonic principles and values. In summary, the movie Pinocchio and Freemasonry share the theme of personal transformation and spiritual growth. Both teach us the importance of being honest, responsible and ethical in our actions. Furthermore, they show us that the path to authenticity and wisdom is not easy; it requires overcoming obstacles and a strong will... In the Movie you will find a lot of hidden symbolism that is not available to everyone, pay attention to every detail, and you will see reflected in it, the path of every initiate.

The truth of the Masonic connection may well lie in the story as written by its author Carlo Lorenzini (Pen name: Carlo Collodi) (1826-1890). He was an ex-soldier fighting in the Italian war of Independence with a lifelong interest in politics. Lorenzini was a writer and novelist who became fascinated by the idea of using an amiable, rascally character as a means of expressing his own convictions through allegory. In 1880 he began writing 'Storia di un burattino' ('The story of a marionette'), also called 'Le avventure di Pinocchio', which was published weekly in 'Il Giornale dei Bambini', the first Italian newspaper for children. Lorenzini died in Florence in 1890, blissfully unaware of the fame and popularity that awaited his creation, 'Pinocchio'.





Commentary on Job 14

Recall the words spoken by the chaplain as the twelve Fellow-craft gather around the grave of the murdered architect: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not...."

In a continuation of commentary on the several passages used by Freemasonry in our ritual this article entitled "Freemasonry on Death" by Midnight Freemason Contributor WB. Adam Thayer will focus on Job 14.

As Freemasons, we are often called upon to meditate on themes which may make us uncomfortable. Throughout our journey of self-improvement and self-empowerment, we are brought face to face with our own inadequacies, faults, and superfluities, and asked to not only face them, but to actively consider them, and work to improve upon them. We call this process "smoothing our ashlar", and it is through these difficult times that we become better versions of who we once were, and in this is hidden the true secret of Masonry.

"Man that is born of woman is but a few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). In every Master's degree we attend, we are reminded that our time here is short, and the journey of improvement is difficult. In the words of Alexis Carrel, "Man cannot remake himself without

suffering, for he is both the marble and the sculptor."

One theme that we are constantly brought to is this: we will all die. Everyone you know, everyone you care about and love, and even you yourself, will one day be nothing more than dust, intermixed with the dust of countless generations that came before you. "We follow our friends to the brink of the grave, and watch them sink into the fathomless abyss; we feel our own feet slipping beneath us, and in a few more suns we too shall be taken into death's silent reign". (Nebraska Masonic Funeral Ceremony)

I'm sorry if this is the first time you have been informed of this, I truly am. Being told that your time is short by a nearly anonymous wall of text on the internet must be a very difficult way to learn that painful truth.

Of course, we are all vaguely aware that we will die; it hovers in the back of our minds, a gnat unable to be swatted, but able to be distracted by worldly things such as work, television, alcohol, and sex. We move from one novelty to the next, in pursuit of peace of mind, and cower in terror when forced to confront the speed at which the sand flows through our hourglass.

We are reminded in the Master's degree that we are expected to face our fear of death; we don't stop on the first or second step, but true to the ideals we have

sworn to uphold, we look forward to the greater light that death will bring us.

We learn in areas of the craft that our own death is inevitable, and that it may well come before our work has been completed. And further; death is not the end, but simply the passage into the Celestial Lodge, where all of our labors may be ceased, and we will find peace and rest that will carry us through a boundless eternity.

Brethren, our time here is brief, and our work is great. We choose the skull as one of our symbols to be an ever-present reminder that we must not delay in building and beautifying our internal temples, because our time here is shorter than we can ever imagine.

Of course, the temple each of us builds within ourselves is a monument to futility if we do not use it to brighten our world. What good is beauty if it is hidden?

As for me, I'm building my temple in the world itself. In the words of Pike, "What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal."

My hope is that, in my little way, through my writing and through my actions, the world is a little brighter for my having been here.





Book Review:

*The man who does not read
good books has no
advantage over the man who
cannot read them.*

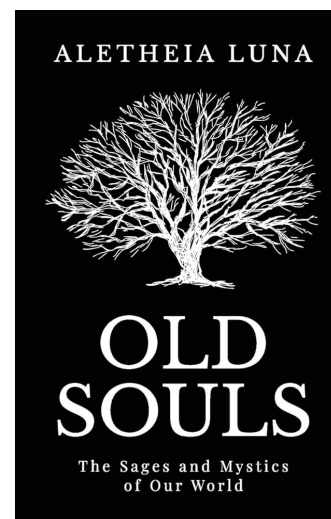
Brother Mark Twain

Old Souls: The Sages and Mystics of Our World by Aletheia Luna

Existing as the perpetual outsiders in society, Old Souls are the teachers, counselors, philosophers and oracles of humanity. They are both in the world, but are not quite of the world at the same time, passing through life on their own solitary paths. In this book, writer and researcher Aletheia Luna provides a compact, elegant and well-researched look into the life of Old Souls. Chapters in the book

- "It's no big deal." A Profile Of The Old Soul Character.
- "You do your thing, and I'll do mine." The Old Soul's Relationship With Family.
- "Just go with the flow." The Old Soul's Relationship With People And The World.
- Soul Ages, Reincarnation and Abraham Maslow.
- "Why do I feel older than old?" The Seven Levels Of Feeling Old.
- Are You A Sage Or A Mystic?
- "Just let me be." The Old Soul Child.

... and more.



Old Souls

We often wonder why more men don't seek membership in our fraternity. We wonder even more why too many of those who do go through degrees soon fade away. For us who love the ritual, the teachings and the companionship of kindred souls we simply can't understand why more men don't seek membership. Could it be that the difference is not of the man but of the soul? Recall, I did say kindred souls.

I have heard people refer to others as 'an old soul' and being curious to what it meant I ended up purchasing the book "Old Souls: Mystic and Sages" by Aletheia Luna (see above). I have read through the book once and recently reread it and find through her descriptions that I am truly an old soul. From her book the following describes me (and maybe you): ***The phrase "Old Soul" is the closest many***

can come to describing those who feel like they have seen and done it all before, who can see through the lies and illusions of existence, and who experience a tired longing to "return home." The desire to return home is just another figurative expression that reveals the thirst to return back to the Source, God, Oneness, or Soul.

Old Souls are contemplative and philosophical people.

Old Souls are able to see the bigger picture.

Old Souls are drawn to knowledge, wisdom, and truth.

Old Souls are innately spiritual people.

Old Souls are emotionally and psychologically mature.

Even though they are said to compose 10-15% of the popula-

tion of the world (it is impossible to be precise), Old Souls have rarely been examined or written about in-depth.

Maybe it is simply that those who join the worlds 'oldest' fraternity are themselves old in the sense of the soul. We are seekers of knowledge and truth and seekers of divine truth. We profess that at death the 'soul disengaged from its cumbrous dust' shall return unto God who gave it.

No one can truly define a soul. Some say our soul has existed from the very beginning and the soul never dies. There are those who believe that the soul is recycled and will return in another existence and will continue to do so until 'it gets it right'. This is considered reincarnation. Whatever the truth it may well be that dedicated Freemasons are old souls.



A Knight, a Ghost and a Freemason

This pair look so serene you'd think they were angels - but nothing could be further from the truth, at least according to folklore. These are the effigies of Sir Thomas "Black" Vaughan and his wife Ellen "The Terrible" Gethin!

Sir Thomas was a landowner based at Hergest Court and was killed in 1469 while fighting at the Battle of Edgecote Moor near Banbury. He was carrying on a tradition here as his father was actually killed at Agincourt decades earlier. His headless body was returned to Kington and interred within the original structure of the church.

Before long sightings were reported of bizarre and terrifying apparitions around the Hergest and Kington area. The headless figure of Sir Thomas Vaughan was seen standing still in the churchyard and beyond, and a huge black dog roamed the farms and hills. It is known that Vaughan did indeed keep a big black hunting hound, with it's own room at Hergest Court, and it was assumed this was it's ghost. A spectral black bull took to suddenly appearing in the town, and even bashed it's way into the church itself, terrifying the assembled congregation. Flies the size of apples were soon added to the ghostly menagerie, and these spawn of Beelzebub were said to drive horses and cattle alike insane with their torments. It was as if the whole area was in the grip of

a haunting the like of which we have only seen in horror movies, and drastic action was called for to rid Kington of the curse of Black Vaughan.

A team of twelve priests arrived in the town and made their base at St Mary's, but a mysterious "cunning man" joined them at the behest of some of the locals. After first calling on the spirit of Black Vaughan to show itself, they waited, holding vigil, ready to intone the litany of exorcism. Midnight arrived, and the air chilled. A strong wind howled around the church, and the holy company began walking in procession towards Hergest Court. They stopped halfway; then as a thick fog descended the ominous sound of heavy footsteps were heard approaching.

The headless figure of Sir Thomas Vaughan in armor clanked slowly towards them, its feet lost in a swirling mist, his glowing eyed black hound by his side. With each step closer the priests began to lose their nerve, until one by one they fled in terror. Four, three, two, now just one brave cleric stood strong in his faith. He faltered, unable to speak, and the cunning man stepped in. The litany was belted out three times while holy water was flung at the apparitions, forcing the hound to run off. Eventually the priest and the wise man got the better of Black Vaughan, fixing him in place, then it is said he forced the ghost into a silver snuff box. The

twelve clerics reassembled then processed down to a lake known as Hergest Water where the exorcist hurled the silver box in as far as he could throw, issuing a final command for the ghost to remain there as if drowned by Moses in the Red Sea.

The exorcism appeared to be successful, with no further reports of spectral men or animals around the area, but the hound lived on. It was said to appear from time to time on land around Hergest Court, always heralding an imminent death in the family. Freemason Sir Arthur Conan Doyle later stayed at Hergest Court and was regaled with tales of the black hound. The Baskerville dynasty was a big deal around this area for some centuries. This story spawned the most famous of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, The Hound of the Baskervilles.

— Continued next page —





A Knight, a Ghost and a Freemason, continued

So what about Ellen “The Terrible” Gethin? Information about Vaughan's wife is scarce but legend tells of her resolving to avenge the murder of her brother David by her cousin Siôn Hir. The lady disguised herself as a hooded commoner and entered an archery contest, when it was her turn to shoot she span round and shot her arrow at the cousin, killing him instantly. However, a local man I chatted to insisted she was trapped at a castle under siege and, disguised as a man, volunteered to use a bow from

the ramparts. Once armed, she wasted no time in killing her cousin under cover of the chaos.

A magnificent alabaster effigy of the pair resides now in St Mary's, it's studious detail looking good today despite various carvings and Vaughan's sword being deliberately broken. Some say these damages were all related to locals trying to keep the pair at rest. See for yourself if you're ever in the borderlands area but Hergest Court is unfortunately very much private and

not to be confused with the nearby Hergest Croft. Under the patronage of Black Vaughan's son Watkin the Court went on to become a repository of bardic songs, poetry and knowledge of Wales including The Red Book of Hergest, a world famous source of Welsh mythology and legend, and the companion volume The White Book which was lost in a fire.

I sincerely hope Black Vaughan and Ellen the Terrible rest in peace!

Proficiency

From Carmel Lodge #421,
Indiana



Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols, which seeks to make good men better. Central to the Masonic journey is the pursuit of proficiency, the commitment to mastering the

teachings, rituals, and principles of Freemasonry. Proficiency is not just about memorizing words and gestures; it is about embodying the values and ideals of Freemasonry in one's daily life.

One of the key aspects of proficiency in Freemasonry is the mastery of ritual. The rituals of Freemasonry are rich in symbolism and meaning, and they serve as a guide for moral and spiritual development. By becoming proficient in these rituals, Masons gain a deeper understanding of

the principles of Freemasonry and how they can be applied to their lives. Proficiency in ritual also allows Masons to effectively pass on the teachings of Freemasonry to future generations, ensuring that its lessons are preserved and transmitted.

Proficiency in Freemasonry is also about living out its principles in daily life. Freemasonry teaches its members to be honest, compassionate, and charitable, and to seek truth, wisdom, and enlightenment. By striving to embody these principles, Masons not only improve themselves but also contribute to the betterment of society as a whole. Proficiency in Freemasonry is therefore not just a personal pursuit but also a commitment to making a positive impact on the world.

Furthermore, proficiency in Freemasonry is important for the

preservation of the fraternity itself. Freemasonry has a long and rich history, and its traditions and teachings have been passed down through generations of Masons. By becoming proficient in Freemasonry, Masons ensure that this heritage is preserved and that the fraternity remains vibrant and relevant in the modern world.

In conclusion, proficiency is essential to the Masonic journey. It is through proficiency that Masons gain a deeper understanding of the teachings and rituals of Freemasonry, embody its principles in their lives, and contribute to the preservation and growth of the fraternity. Proficiency is not just a goal to be achieved but an ongoing commitment to personal and moral development.



The Lodge Gate

"Chat"

Charlie began employment with Biltmore Hardware at the age of 13



There will only be a few of us Biltmore Masons that remember the 'old' Biltmore Village with its hardware stores (there were 2) a few gas stations, drug stores and community grocery owned by Biltmore member Roy Trantham. There was a time when Biltmore was its own town and the City of Asheville did not extend beyond the railroad tracks. The big employer was the Estate dairy and there was a hospital tucked back off the road. There was no Interstate 40 and the railroad still served passengers at the depot. There was also one more thing, or rather I should say person, that was a fixture in Biltmore and is no more and that was Charles "Chat" McAdams.

A native of Greenville, SC and a resident of Asheville for most of his life, he was the son of the late R.O. and Ethel Anderson McAdams.

"Chat" as he was fondly known, was a graduate of Stephens-Lee High School and later attended South East Commercial College and Blanton's Business College. He held degrees in Business, Accounting and Salesmanship.

Charlie was a veteran of the U S Army, retiring after 34 years of service with the rank of First Sergeant. He participated in the second D-Day landing on Normandy Beach and helped organize the famed Red Ball Express; mostly African American soldiers who drove in long convoys to get supplies to the front lines, often under German artillery fire and nightly bombing raids.

McAdams, who was surrounded in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge and who met Patton before the war's end, said the Army taught him to take orders and work as a team member. Charlie received a Presidential Citation from President Harry Truman and was the recipient of many other military and civilian awards.

Anybody who remembers going into Biltmore Hardware may recall that it seemed an unorganized assemblage of nails and screws and about anything things else one might need or want. When you walked in Chat would greet you and once you told him what you needed he quickly found it and helped you with your purchase.

Chat began employment with Biltmore Hardware at the age of 13 and worked a total of 66 years. He was a member of New Mt. Olive Baptist Church and served as Trustee and Church Clerk, receiving an 18 year award. Chat was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #91, American Legion Post #44, Venus Masonic Lodge #62

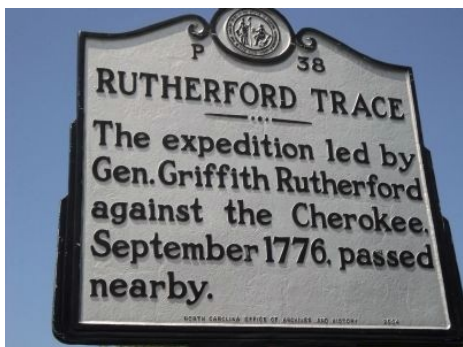
F & AM and Fawndale Lodge #363 I.B.P.O.E. of W (Elks).

Charlie McAdams was 88 when he died on September 25, 2009.





Biltmore — 1776



Many years ago I visited Williamsburg, Virginia and was amazed at the proliferation of signs stating that in this house or at this site in 1776 this or that happened. I joked that at my house in 1776 nothing happened as this area of the country was so far removed from the world, but it seems I was wrong.

Just below the Biltmore Masonic Temple, along US 25 is a sign stating; 'The expedition led by Gen. Griffith Rutherford against the Cherokee, September 1776, passed nearby'.

On September 10, 1776, during the American Revolution, North Carolina General Griffith Rutherford attacked and burned the Cherokee town of Nikwasi as part of what became known as the "Rutherford Trace." It was part of a united effort by North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia to weaken the Cherokee Indians before they could fully ally and coordinate attacks with British troops. The campaign

also was retribution for the punishment enacted by the native people against the newly arrived settlers in the west.

In the first few days, the militia crossed the Blue Ridge east of Black Mountain, came down along the Swannanoa River through what is now Biltmore Village and crossed the French Broad River behind what is now the Biltmore Square Mall. Trekking west past Enka, down Hominy Creek and into Canton, they turned up where the present Locust Field Cemetery is and headed toward Bethel along what is now N.C. 110. From there, they marched up the east side of the Pigeon River, crossed Silver Bluff and continued over the mountain into Waynesville, where they camped at Sulphur Springs.

By Sept. 8, Rutherford's men marched to the north side of the Tuckasegee River in Jackson County near Webster and destroyed the Cherokee town of

Watauga. Crossing the Tuckasegee and up Savannah Creek, Rutherford's men marched up Cowee Gap and toward Nikwasi, what is now Franklin.

Nikwasi covered approximately 100 acres in what is now Macon County, and was a spiritual and ceremonial center for the Cherokee, who inhabited it until 1819 when they were forced off their lands. The present day town of Franklin was built on it, and a large mound in the commercial district is all that remains of the former Cherokee presence.

The expedition decimated many Cherokee towns in just a few weeks. The destruction of crops, livestock and food stores effectively ended the military threat of the Cherokee. As refugees, surviving over the winter on wild game, nuts and fruits, the remaining Cherokee signed peace treaties the following year.

Freemasonry, An Evolutionary Science

A quote is a written thought. That is not a definition you will find supplied by Google. Quotes are what people write when a thought comes about related to a scene or an experience. One which recently came to my attention is this: "Unfortunately some people were not put here to evolve. They are here to remind you what it looks like if you don't."

Freemasonry is an evolutionary

science. It is in itself is unchanging but what it does for the Masonic traveler is to teach and mold the profane being into one of an enlightened spirit. In truth, not every man who becomes a Mason is changed in such a fashion. If one is to become enlightened and thus evolved, he must learn from the lessons of the ritual, focus upon the meanings of the symbols and allegories and apply it to his life. These

teaching are to be considered a continuous education. Try as we might to remove all the rough edges and corners of our ashlar we are still fallible humans and prone to error. Though not perfect, our ashlar will be smoother than it would have been otherwise.

We then can look at the world of the profane and see in them images of what we could have been were it not for Freemasonry.



You Can't Go Home Again, or Can You

Asheville's Thomas Wolfe's magnificent novel "You Can't Go Home Again" is both the story of a young writer longing to make his mark upon the world and a sweeping portrait of America and Europe from the Great Depression through the years leading up to World War II. He discovers a world plagued by political uncertainty and on the brink of transformation, yet he finds within himself the capacity to meet it with optimism and a renewed love for his birthplace. He is a changed man yet a hopeful one, awake to the knowledge that one can never fully "go back home to your family, back home to your childhood...away from all the strife and conflict of the world...back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time." We find that our homes are not the refuge they once were because they sit in an ever changing world.

The book title has since become an idiom with a deep meaning for those of us who understand it. Home, even if we never touch a thing is still a changeable world. Freemasonry for some is a home. It has a feel, a look and many of the baser aspects of a home. A Masonic lodge is a place we moved into earlier in our lives and grew into better men. It is a place we leave to go to work or to some other aspect in our lives and it is a place we return to just like a home. But



Freemasonry and its associated Masonic lodge is much like Wolfe's referenced home.

The night we were raised was new and exciting. Then, we knew little of the world we had entered. That night we met and befriended many men we then called brother. In our mind we wanted to wear the collar and hat of the Master and we desired to learn the ritual so that we too could usher men into this world. Ten, twenty and thirty years on, we hardly recognize the world we entered. Everything has changed. The building may be the same but many of the men we met on that first night are dead or have moved. The dedication and proficiency of the officers and degree teams has diminished, or is it that our memory of such things has faded. The overall attendance of the meetings has declined as has

the interest in things Masonic. The community surrounding the building has changed and so has the community's attitude towards our craft.

We return to our lodge each week, month or just occasionally to find that it isn't the same anymore and we get depressed and worried. But then, if we stop and think, we will realize that it is not just the physical elements that have changed; we have changed. Freemasonry has done its job. It made a better man of us, a more mature individual with a different outlook on life. Sure, the men of old are gone and in this busy world of jobs and young families, the officers can't find the time to learn their parts. The membership has aged and our attendance is lower. The world offers more for men now than fifty years ago. But if we take a deep breath and think about it, we will agree that the world has changed; we have changed but Freemasonry remains the same. It is there waiting for us like that old front porch of your youth. We can go home again.

But brothers, as those who came before us, we must leave something for those who follow us. We must keep Freemasonry viable and active for the next generations. Come back home.



Let's Dance (an opinion piece)

First a story.



I once told my wife I was going out to buy an envelope:

"Oh", she said, "well, you're not a poor man. You know, why don't you go online and buy a hundred envelopes and put them in the closet?"

And so I pretended not to hear her and went out to get an envelope because I have a hell of a good time in the process of buying one envelope.

I meet a lot of people. And see some great looking babies. And a fire engine goes by. And I give them the thumbs up. And I'll ask a woman what kind of dog that is. And, and I don't know. The moral of the story is - we're here on Earth to fart around.

And, of course, the computers will do us out of that. And what the computer people don't realize, or they don't care, is we're dancing animals. You know, we love to move around. And it's like we're not supposed to dance at all anymore.

Let's all get up and move around a bit right now... or at least dance. Kurt Vonnegut

Since the onset of Covid the Grand Lodge has allowed lodges to hold meetings via computer interface using applications like Zoom or Facechat. Oddly, the big concern among many who opposed this method of meeting is how do we secure our secret signs and words? I have news for you, that cat is out of the bag. That information has been

known among the so-called profane for years. We have no secrets.

Masonry has always been about meeting your brother face to face, shaking hands and, well let's just say it, being human. The computer removes that vital part of humanity by keeping us at a perpetual distance. If the concept of Freemasonry had been envisioned in a world of computer technology maybe things would be different but because it was created a long time ago before social media I can hardly see how we can effectively meet online.

So next time someone brings up the idea of an online Masonic chat/video session just politely so, "no, I think I'll dance."

Charity In Action



Sometimes stories of past events and human kindness come out of conversations that arise when two people talk about old times and old friends. The following story was brought to my attention one Sunday morning as I and an old Masonic friend were reminiscing about another old Masonic friend.

It seems that this old friend's grandson died and the family found itself unable to pay the funeral expense. A long time member and Past Master of Biltmore Lodge heard of the trouble and decided to do something about it. He called upon another

member of the lodge to drive him to the funeral home where the deceased family had procured services. The old Past Master asked the funeral home administrator what the cost of the funeral service was and he was initially told that the information could not be revealed. The old Past Master told the administrator that he was there to pay for the services and that he would write a check there and then.

The amount was disclosed and the bill was paid. The old Past Master then told the administrator that if the family asked they

were to be told that Biltmore Masonic Lodge paid the bill.

This charitable action was borne out of a financial need and a willingness to adhere to the obligations taken upon the altar of the lodge. Freemasons are taught to practice charity and to care, not only for their own, but also for the community as a whole – both by charitable giving, and by voluntary efforts and works as individuals.

That my brother, is Masonic charity in action.



Streetcars and the Traveling Man

Was the formation of Biltmore Masonic Lodge a direct result of George Vanderbilt? The short answer probably is yes. There were Freemasons living in and around the village of Best prior to 1891. The closest lodge to the village at the time was Mt. Hermon # 118 but it was in the center of downtown Asheville. You might think that the travel time from the village to downtown in those days would take a long time but you would be wrong.

Prior to the construction of the famed Biltmore House the Asheville region was well supplied with railroads. The one of importance to us was the line from Salisbury to Asheville via Old Fort and Black Mountain. The rail line not only delivered supplies for the building of the house but also passengers des-

tinued for the city. This rail line also made it possible for Freemasons to travel from Asheville to Raleigh to conduct business. But another kind of rail supported Masonry.

Asheville's electric streetcar system was the first of its kind in North Carolina — and only the second such system in the South — so when the shiny yellow trolleys made their debut, Asheville's residents were understandably excited. Now, for a nickel (the equivalent of a little over \$1.60 today), folks could consistently and much more quickly navigate the city's streets in relative comfort.

On February 1, 1889, (2 years before Biltmore Lodge formed) the first streetcar in North Carolina made its debut in Asheville.

The first line extended from Pack Square down Biltmore Avenue and Southside Avenue, and then was routed west of present-day McDowell Street to the Biltmore train depot. The cars were capable of traversing from Biltmore's train station to the heart of downtown in a mere 10 minutes, a pace previously unimaginable. This line allowed Masons in the village and surrounding areas to visit Mt. Hermon Lodge until they had their own lodge which began in March of 1891.

Mr. Vanderbilt's call to craftsmen and architects from far flung locales brought to the village many Freemasons. These men, along with the members of the Craft living in the area, were the reason a lodge was established in Biltmore.



Looking up Biltmore Avenue towards Pack Square 1896 before the non dismantled Vance Monument was erected

Ramp Season!

Well, it's almost ramp season. Ramps? What are ramps, and what the heck is a ramp season? I'm glad you asked.

Ramps, also sometimes called wild leeks, are a type of wild onion, and they look similar to a scallion or spring onion — they have a bulb and a tall stalk and long, flat green leaves on top. They have a strong flavor that can taste like a cross between an onion and garlic. They're often served grilled or sautéed, or incorporated into pasta dishes, turned into vinaigrette, pesto, or

butter; they can also be pickled and saved for later in the year. For the brave of heart they can be eaten raw.

Ramp season will vary from place to place in Western North Carolina and will be effected by the weather. Generally, ramp season begins in late March and, like the smell of eaten ramps, will persist for a couple of months. If you don't know or haven't guessed at this point ramps are renowned for their potent smell. Once eaten, the odor is evident on the breath for a long period.

This brings to mind a 'vivid' memory. Two of our late brothers, Worshipful Brothers John Moody and Jake Cauble were best of friends. Each spring they would go up into the mountains to dig ramps. Their timing always seemed to correspond with a Master Mason's degree at Biltmore. Between the first and second sections of the degree Biltmore always has a supper. Jake and John would bring their ramps as their contribution to the meal. Without revealing detail, in the second section of the degree, the candidate is conducted before a brother where he is questioned about a particular



circumstance. The distance between the two is but a few inches. Jake always played the part of the inquiring brother. Upon opening his mouth and asking the question the stench of the ramps would drive the conductor and candidate backwards. Jake and most of the assembled brethren had a hardy laugh at the reaction of the candidate.



The Ancient Kingdom of Septimania



Last week I made my annual presentation to the Lodge commemorating Patrick, who although usually known as "Saint" Patrick, was actually never canonized in the modern sense as the Roman Church currently practices; his "sainthood" is simply by popular acclamation. During my presentation I mentioned an area in the south of present day France which was at one point known as Septimania. A few of the brethren approached me after my presentation saying that they had never heard of Septimania and what was its significance. I am going to address this in the present article.

If you look at a current map of France you will not see Septimania, however this region has played a huge part in the overall history of France. Septimania roughly lay along the southern coast of France extending from the foothills of the Pyrenees which form the border area between Spain and France eastward including the coastal city of Narbonne but not quite as far as Marseille. This is the southernmost part of what was once Aquitaine. The region got its name from the practice of giving land to members of the Seventh Legion of Rome upon their retirement from military service. This was part of the area of Gaul which Julius Caesar describes in some detail in his "Gallic Wars". Its importance lies in the fact that it was easily accessed by merchants and traders as well as

conquerors. As early as the 8th century BC Greeks had founded settlements along the southern coast of France, notably the area around Marseille, from which they traded and used as outposts as they ventured all the way to the British Isles working the tin mines in Cornwall, so from quite early on the area was well known. The area also became part of the stronghold of the Visigoths; there were two groups of Goths, the Ostro or eastern Goths, and the Western or Visi Goths. The Visigoths led by Alaric, after they had sacked Rome in AD 410, settled in this general area of southern France. The Merovingians would follow later as rulers with much intrigue and dynastic turbulence. I will take a short turn here to elaborate a bit upon the life of the last Merovingian king, Dagobert II. Just to show how well traveled the people of this period of the early Medieval times were Dagobert II was, due to the aforementioned dynastic intrigue, spirited out of France as a child by protectors and taken to Ireland where he grew to adulthood in a Celtic monastery near Slane which was not far from present day Dublin. He, as an adult, traveled to Britain where he became acquainted with Bishop Wilfred of Ripon, the same Wilfred who was the force behind the Roman Church's suppression of the Celtic Church. To make a long story short, Wilfred helped Dagobert reclaim his rightful heritage and throne in France (he had been born the

heir to the kingdom of Austrasia) but Dagobert's reign was to be short lived; he reigned only three years being assassinated while on a hunting trip in the year 679 near the city of Stenay. Dagobert II was said to have amassed a huge treasure which he stored near the town of Rennes-Le Chateau, a small mountain town in this same area of what was once Septimania, which would play a major role in the history, and mystery, of the area. Another little known fact concerning this area is that it from early on had a large Jewish population. After the Jewish wars of AD 66-70 and the later Bar Kochba War of AD132-135, the Jewish diaspora, the dispersal of Jews from Jerusalem and Palestine in general, there was a large segment of the Jewish people who instead of going to the established Jewish enclaves in Bagdad or Alexandria, moved to the western areas, France and Spain. There was already a large Jewish group in Rome by the early to mid 1st century as witnessed by Paul's letter to the Romans. At one point the Jewish group in the south of France formed their own kingdom, or principality as it were, with its capital at Narbonne.

— Continued next page —



Septimania, continued

This was established in 768. It is much too intricate and involved, complex to say the least, to delve into this Jewish aspect of the region in a short article such as this, but suffice it to say that hopefully this demonstrates just how deeply layered and multi-faceted the history of this area is! I will suggest that most notably the southern area of France is known for the great tragedy known as the Albigensian Crusade in which well over 30,000 members of the Cathar religion were exterminated as heretics by the Catholic Church. The Cathars, the "pure ones", were considered heretical by the Roman Church because they were dualists and had gnostic leanings. They became so dominant in the area that they had become a full

fledged rival to the Catholic Church, having their own bishops and clergy, thus they were considered a threat and were subjected to the full force of the Inquisition. Let me back up a bit, from the time of the Visigoths who were Arian Christians, also considered heretical by the Roman Church although not persecuted as were the later Cathars, there had been considerable disparate belief systems, philosophies, religions, throughout this general area. There were elements of the older Celtic religions and aspects of other pre-Christian religions, the pagan Roman religion which borrowed much from the Greeks, which never totally died out with the advent of Christianity. It is no wonder that this area was a cen-

ter of much diversity of religious thought....and, for the dominant Catholic Church of the Medieval period, could not be tolerated. Although attempts were made to wipe out the Cathars they were never thoroughly rooted out; it is said that vestiges of Catharism lasted well into modern times in small enclaves in and near the city of Arcques....pretty amazing! I will address some of these issues in subsequent articles or presentations at Lodge but for now I will leave you with the hope that this short excursus into the history of Septimania has both answered some questions and piqued your interest. As I always say, "that's my story, brethren, and I'm sticking to it!"

Brother Bucky

A Short History of French Freemasonry

The history of Freemasonry in France is complicated by the fact that for over 150 years Grand lodges, Chapters, Rites and Orders, as well as Councils, united, divided, vanished, and revived again. Here too, basically, "Ancient Masonry" consists of three grades: "Entered Apprentices", "Fellow Craft" and "Master Mason" that includes the "Supreme Order of the Royal Arch". However, so-called "Higher Degrees" have appeared at one time or the other, and most are still alive.

The majority of all these Higher

Degrees, especially those created during the Age of Enlightenment, are based on the virtues of Chivalry, and on legend like the link between Freemasons and Knights Templar. Obviously high sounding titles appealed to the elitist French Masonry. They are known as "degrés ou Grades Ecossais" although they have nothing to do with Scotland. They have been introduced by Ramsay who claimed that Freemasonry started as a chivalric Order before moving from France to Scotland in the fourteenth century, to reappear again in 1717. Initially they were independent of each other, but the

Grand Lodge of France put some order into them in 1760.

In 1761 Stephen Morin was made "Grand Inspector in all Parts of the New World" with the order to create there as many lodges as possible in order to "multiply the Royal Order of Masonry in all the Perfect and Sublime Degrees". What was to become the "Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite" had found its way to North America. Freemasonry was well established in France at the start of the 1789 revolution, but it had practically disappeared by 1793-94 during the "Terror".

In 1877 the Grand Orient was

founded to reflect the anti-clerical and anti-religious feelings of the time, and Masonic candidates did not have to profess to believe in the Supreme Being. All references to God and the bible were taken out from its Constitution and Rituals. This allowed unbelievers, atheists and freethinkers to join the Grand Orient, and the organization involved itself in politics and social policy. As a result the other national Grand Lodges cast the Grand Orient out of the Masonic world. Freemasonry did not exist anymore in France until 1913 when the National Grand Lodge of France was created.



Those Darn Statistics

“Before the curse of statistics fell upon mankind we lived a happy, innocent life, full of merriment and go and informed by fairly good judgment.” Hilaire Belloc

Some years ago I began a project whereby I would write my observations of a quote that I had heard or lived by. I wrote of how they applied to my life or in the development of the person I am now. What began as a simple writing experiment has turned into a document of nearly one hundred thousand words. In the end, this document may well be a biography of sorts. From It I have selected the following which I hope you enjoy.

When I was a kid growing up in the 1960s we were innocently happy with our station in life. We lived in a house, had a car, ate the food provided, went to church and school, played with our friends and; well, led a normal life. I and my friends were aware of the Vietnam War, the struggle against communism and the white-black divide but we were kids and not concerned with the details. I didn’t realize that my family was struggling at times to make ends meet; that what we were at times would today be considered poor. My family was pretty much like other families in the community.

Today, thanks to the endless march of the news media, social media and the constant babble of politicians, people of all walks of life realize just how bad or good they have it based on statistics. During the Covid pandemic we were daily bombarded with sta-

tistics. We saw the percentages of the population who were sick or dead based on age, race, locale, you name it. The political landscape too is dominated by statistics. Conservative candidates for office will shy away from Asheville because the statistics say that this area is dominated by liberal and far left people. Statistics show how the decrease in police protections has given rise to the increase crime and in gun sales. But I believe also that these statistics constantly in front of people have also pushed up paranoia and further increased the sale of guns. This and more is splashed all over the news and drilled into the brain.

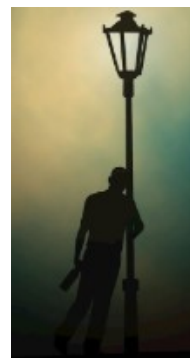
Even within our beloved Freemasonry statistics rule. Grand Lodges all over the world are wringing their collective hands due to statistics. Once flush with a large memberships and bank accounts from dues money these Grand Lodges are now pointing to statistics and bemoaning the losses and crying for an increase in per capita taxes so that they can continue their extravagant spending. These statistics show the decrease of membership of age groups such as ‘The Greatest Generation’ and the ‘Silent Generation’ as they are dying off. They show too how the ‘Baby Boomers’, that group of which I am a member are dying as well. They then are joined by the statistics of the Millennial Generation, Gen Z and Gen whatever’s lifestyle preferences and these are all rolled into one report to generate panic among those who rely on membership numbers.



Statistics can show you everything you wish and don’t wish to see in life and frankly I wonder of their importance. Statistics can be twisted to support or destroy a cause. They prove all or nothing and sometimes with very little fact to support them.

“Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are pliable” so said Mark Twain. Without statistics life would continue and more happily I would suggest. Sometimes ignorance is bliss.

“Most people use statistics like a drunk man uses a lamppost; more for support than illumination” Andrew Lang



2025 BILTMORE LODGE OFFICERS



Office	Officer
Master	Howard Hazelrigg
Sr. Warden	Michael Ogus
Jr. Warden	Frank Bryson
Treasurer	Doug Robertson
Secretary	Larry Dotson, PM
Sr. Deacon	Tony Rice
Jr. Deacon	Eric Willis
Sr. Steward	Jamie Bradley
Jr. Steward	Xavier Robinson
Tyler	Norman Goering, PM
Chaplain	Alex Hanks

Death of an Apprentice

Gloucester Cathedral, formally the Cathedral Church of St Peter and the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, in Gloucester, England; stands in the north of the city near the River Severn. It was constructed near the site of the former abbey in the 11th century. It is a magnificent structure.

The 14th-century 'Prentice's bracket' in the south transept of Gloucester Cathedral has usually been thought to represent the fatal plunge of a young mason, watched by an older colleague. It's "very significant," according to Pascal Mychalysin, the cathedral's Master Mason, "because it is in the shape of a square, a most potent symbol for masons and famously adopted by the Freemasons". Pascal adds that, surprisingly, accidents of this kind were not common in the Middle Ages. This early 14th-century sculpture was created precisely because such an event was relatively rare.

Clockwise — Interior of the Cathedral

The shocked Master

The falling apprentice

