

The TROWEL

AUGUST 2026

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1

SERVING WINSTON-SALEM AND OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1854

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Brotherly Love • Relief • Truth

*"The real voyage of discovery consists
not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes."*

— MARCEL PROUST

A NOTE TO THE BRETHREN

A first swing at what The Trowel might become.

So, what do you think?

I thought it might be interesting to see what The Trowel could become when more of the Lodge finds its way into its pages.

I would especially like The Trowel to become a place where Brothers can contribute their own ideas, interests, questions, photographs, stories and thoughts. It doesn't need to speak with one voice. In fact, it might be more interesting if it doesn't.

This is a first swing at it. Some things will work. Some probably won't. But if you see something here you like—or something you think could be better—say so. Better yet, get involved.

And to those Brothers we haven't seen at Lodge for a while: you are missed. There is no lecture attached to that and no guilt intended. I would simply be very glad to see you walk through the door again. Until then, I hope The Trowel can at least help keep you connected to what is happening at Winston Lodge.

For now, take a look. Tell me what you think. And if something in these pages gives you an idea for the next issue, send it in.

Steven Miley



TRESTLEBOARD & CALENDAR

PLANNING OUR WORK, STRENGTHENING OUR BOND

REMAINING AUGUST 2026

	Sunday, August 23	Degree Practice	3:00 PM
	Monday, August 24	Fellowcraft Degree	6:30 PM
	Sunday, August 30	Degree Practice	3:00 PM
	Monday, August 31	Degree Practice	6:30 PM

SEPTEMBER 2026 — LOOKING AHEAD

	Every Sunday	Degree Practice	3:00 PM
	Every Monday	Degree Practice	6:30 PM
	Monday, September 14	Stated Communication Dinner 6:30 PM • Lodge opens 7:30 PM	

THIS MONTH IN MASONIC HISTORY



SEPTEMBER 18, 1793
George Washington
laid the cornerstone of
the U.S. Capitol in a
Masonic ceremony.



SEPTEMBER 29, 1784
African Lodge No. 459
was chartered, a
foundational moment
in Prince Hall Masonry.

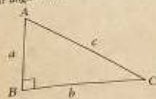


THE PYTHAGOREAN THEOREM OR THE 47TH PROPOSITION OF EUCLID

In any right-angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

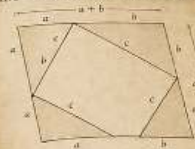
$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

Let ABC be a right-angled triangle, right angle at B .



Then, the square of the side opposite the right angle (c^2) is equal to the sum of the squares of the sides containing the right angle ($a^2 + b^2$).

GEOMETRICAL PROOF BY AREAS



Area of outer square = $(a+b)^2$
Area of four triangles = $4 \left(\frac{1}{2} ab \right) = 2ab$
Area of inner square = c^2
Therefore:
 $(a+b)^2 = 2ab + c^2$
 $a^2 + 2ab + b^2 = 2ab + c^2$
 $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$

PROPORTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In right-angled triangle ABC (right angle at B):

$$\frac{a}{c} = \sin A, \quad \frac{b}{c} = \sin C, \quad \frac{a}{b} = \tan A$$

$$c = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$$

CONSTRUCTIONS

Constructing a right-angled triangle given the hypotenuse and one side.

1. Draw a line segment AB equal to the hypotenuse c .

2. Draw a semicircle with AB as diameter.

3. Draw a perpendicular line from B to the semicircle, meeting it at C .

4. Join AC . Then ABC is a right-angled triangle with right angle at B .

LODGE NEWS

Around Winston No. 167

THE WORK CONTINUES

Monday night was a good night for degree work at Winston Lodge. We successfully conferred an Entered Apprentice Degree and welcomed another Brother into the Craft.

Before the degree, another Brother successfully returned his Entered Apprentice catechism with his coach, Bro. Dan Sheets. He did an excellent job, and we are looking forward to conferring the Fellowcraft Degree this coming Monday at 6:30 PM.

And yes, we would very much like to give both of these Brothers the public recognition they deserve by printing their names here.

Apparently Grand Lodge has other ideas.

Under the North Carolina Code, the name of a candidate for a degree — including a Brother awaiting advancement — is not to be published. So, for the moment:

Congratulations, Brother Whose Name We Are Not Allowed to Print.

And congratulations to the other Brother Whose Name We Are Also Not Allowed to Print.

We know who you are. We're proud of the work. Raleigh will have to take our word for it.

GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK

Bro. Larry J. Toth, PM, Lodge Coach, is back in full form, and his presence around Winston Lodge has been felt. His experience, knowledge, and steady influence have long made him an important part of the Lodge. It is simply good to have him back among the Brethren.

KEEPING THE BRETHREN WELL

A well-deserved shout-out goes to our Junior Warden, Bro. Curtiss Scott, who continues to do a great job keeping the Brethren fed — from dinner before Lodge to desserts and treats after degree work. The work may be serious; fortunately, the refreshments need not be.



After the Entered Apprentice Degree: our newest Brother pictured with the Brethren of Winston Lodge No. 167.

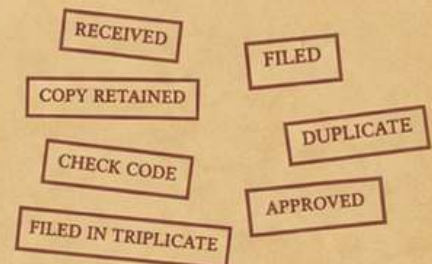
FROM THE TRENCHES OF THE SECRETARY'S DESK

A special salute to Bro. Ronnie Vaughn, PM, Secretary, and Worshipful Mark Wilson, Assistant Secretary, who somehow keep the rest of us organized while navigating the forms, reports, regulations, deadlines, codes, notices, and assorted hoops that come with keeping a Lodge running.

Most of us get to enjoy the visible side of Masonry. Meanwhile, at the Secretary's desk, the i's are dotted, the t's are crossed, and occasionally both are probably checked against three regulations and submitted in duplicate.

It is work most of us never see and, speaking for at least one member of this Publications Committee, work considerably beyond my abilities. I can't even spell without a computer. Without one, this publication would be hell a botched up.

So here's to Ronnie and Mark, fighting the good fight with pen, keyboard, calendar, and Code book — keeping Winston Lodge squared away while the rest of us get on with the Craft.



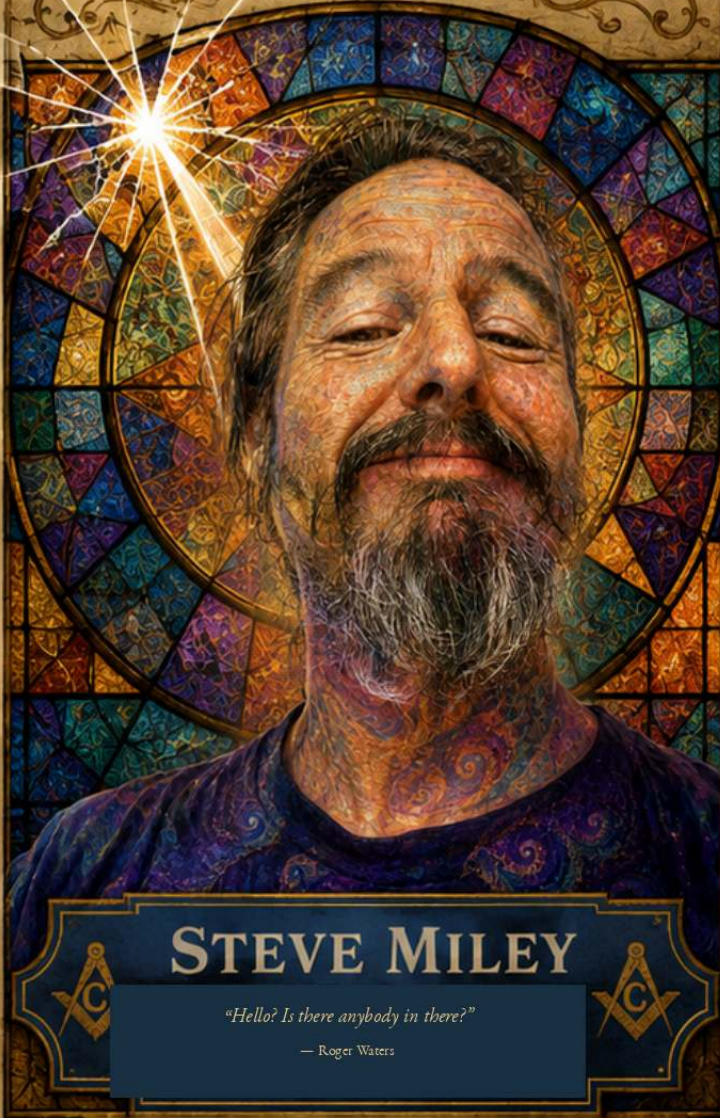
Long live orderly bureaucracy.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

The Publications Committee is beginning to come together around a broader communications effort — The Trowel, the Lodge website, social media, photography, events, and the annual Craftsman's Companion.

The goal is to connect those pieces so our own Brethren can stay better informed and the wider community can better see that Winston Lodge No. 167 is here, active, and has been part of Winston-Salem since 1854.

BROTHER SPOTLIGHT



STEVE MILEY

"Hello? Is there anybody in there?"

— Roger Waters

Looking for the one who is looking.

There is something profoundly strange about being conscious at all. Somewhere behind these words is an experience that wants me to believe it belongs to me. But when I actually look for that me—paying close attention, practicing mindfulness—I can't quite find it.

Thoughts appear. Sensations appear. Memories appear. Even the feeling of being a separate observer appears. But to whom?

Physics tells us that time isn't the universal clock our everyday experience suggests. Relativity makes duration dependent upon motion and gravity. At smaller scales, quantum mechanics replaces much of our comfortable classical picture with probabilities and relationships. Follow cosmology far enough backward and eventually even ordinary questions about before and after begin behaving strangely.

Then turn the telescope around.

The atoms doing the wondering were forged by processes that began long before there were human beings to wonder about anything. Somehow matter arranged itself into nervous systems capable of constructing models of the universe—and eventually constructing models of themselves inside that universe.

So now part of the universe is sitting here asking what the universe is.

And if my purpose here within the universe is simply to allow it to more clearly examine and explore itself, I'm perfectly satisfied with that.

And if the brain constructs the experience of a continuous self, what exactly is the thing claiming ownership of the construction?

Maybe consciousness isn't simply something the brain produces. Maybe our individual experience occurs within consciousness, and what we call reality is already a narrow representation constrained by the senses and nervous system through which we encounter it. Whatever the underlying reality may be, we aren't experiencing all of it.

I don't know.

That's what makes it interesting.

Zen practice, for me, isn't about making the mind blank. It's closer to an experiment: watch carefully enough and see what is actually there. A thought arrives before "I" decide to think it. An emotion appears. Attention moves. The narrator immediately arrives afterward and says, I did that.

But did it?

And then comes the part that really gets me:

What happens when the thing doing the investigating is also the thing being investigated?

The brain studies the brain. Consciousness examines consciousness. The observer goes looking for the observer.

And somewhere down there, the distinction between the microscope and the specimen starts getting awfully difficult to maintain.





COACH'S CORNER

An Evening with Worshipful Larry J. Toth, PM

Lodge Coach - on the spark, deeper meaning, and helping a Brother find his place in the Craft

What began as a conversation about coaching soon wandered - productively - into what draws a man to Masonry, how words become understanding, how understanding becomes character, what keeps Brothers engaged, and what Winston Lodge might become.

THE SPARK

THE TROWEL: I've always thought there has to be something more than simply wanting another place to socialize. There has to be some unanswered question, some longing - some sort of spark in a man's heart that would lead him to become interested in Masonry and eventually petition a Lodge. Is that something you look for?

TOTH: You said the word right there. There has to be some sort of spark in there.

When I vet somebody, I'm asking questions to find out whether his attitude is a Masonic attitude. How does he treat people? How does he run his life? Is there a spiritual component to his life? We're supposed to be finding out whether Masonry is in his heart.

I explain the financial responsibility and the commitment of time. I ask for about nine hours a month. A lot of people back off when they understand what is actually being asked of them.

WHAT MAKES A COACH?

THE TROWEL: What makes a good Masonic coach?

TOTH: You have to be a good listener. You have to be very good at inspiring someone to action. One of the things I do as a coach is I don't just teach words. I teach meanings and applications of the meanings.

As I go through the degrees with a candidate, I do my best to build a fire of curiosity and action under him, so that when he becomes a Master Mason, he is self-starting and self-studying.

THE TROWEL: So ideally he comes out of the process with even more questions than he started with?

TOTH: That's the encouragement. You want to have a dialogue. If you build a good rapport with your candidate, he'll share things in his life, and sometimes there is something in Masonry that can be applied to what he's dealing with. Then he comes back and says, yes, I applied it - this is what happened.

One of the ways you become a true master of Masonry is in the repetition of the applications. You repeat, revise and refine until you get it right.

"I don't just teach words. I teach meanings and applications of the meanings."

DEEPER MEANING - AND WHAT A SECRET CAN BE

THE TROWEL: You keep using the phrase deeper meaning. Is that what people sometimes call the esoteric side of Masonry?

TOTH: I don't really like calling it esoteric because that word scares some people. I just call it deeper meaning. You learn what something means, and then you ask the next question: How do I apply it?

THE TROWEL: People sometimes call Masonry a secret society, although Masons themselves more often describe it as a society with secrets. But listening to you, I wonder whether some of the most important 'secrets' are of another kind entirely. They can be sitting right in front of us and still remain hidden until we are ready to ask the right question.

TOTH: Right. A coach's job - the mentor's job - is to build that curiosity. When you see something, the first question should be, What does that mean? And then the next question is, How do I apply it?

THE TROWEL: So the veil isn't necessarily something somebody else is keeping closed. Sometimes it remains because we haven't yet learned how to pull it back ourselves.

TOTH: Exactly.

THE TROWEL: And even understanding it intellectually isn't really the end of the process.

TOTH: No. You learn it, you learn the meaning, and then you apply it. Repeated application is a process of mastery. Eventually you no longer just have the meanings of the working tools and concepts in your head - you begin to represent those things in your actions and words.

THE TROWEL: So ultimately it has to move from the head into the heart.

TOTH: Right.

BEYOND MEMORIZATION

THE TROWEL: You also said you don't believe straight memorization is enough.

TOTH: Straight memorization will burn your brain out. I use explanations as a break from the memorization. I like to give the candidate time for the things he's learned to marinate.

You never truly become a master until you've applied something over and over and then start to teach somebody else. When you can teach somebody else, you have it mastered.

THE TROWEL: What advice do you give a Brother who is nervous about returning his catechism?

TOTH: It doesn't have to be perfect. By the time I put somebody in that chair, I've already heard him do every part correctly at one time or another, and I know he understands what it means. The Master knows I wouldn't have him sitting there unless he was ready.

I tell him to concentrate on me and forget everybody else in the room. The questions are the questions. I've had people freeze because they were nervous, but I already knew they were ready.





COACH'S CORNER

GOOD DEGREE WORK

THE TROWEL: What does good degree work look like?

TOTH: Good degree work focuses on the candidate. It's not how perfect you are. It's how the candidate receives the work. If you make a mistake and you don't show it, the candidate isn't going to know.

It's all about the candidate. That's one of the reasons I don't like horseplay. The candidate may hear people snickering and have no idea what the context is. We want him to understand that what is happening is serious. The delivery should protect his experience.

"Good degree work focuses on the candidate."

AFTER THE DEGREES: FINDING A BROTHER'S PLACE

THE TROWEL: What can a Lodge do better to keep a new Brother involved after he has finished the degrees and there is no longer a catechism waiting for him?

TOTH: We have to make sure that we know what that Brother's goals are. That falls on the coaches and the mentors.

The first catechism session after every degree, I ask: Has your opinion of Masonry changed? Has your direction in Masonry changed? I make note of what they say and pass that along to lodge leaders.

Some people don't want to be in line. Some want to help in the kitchen. Some want charity projects. They'll do all that stuff, but they do not want to be in line.

TOTH: And I say 'just' - there is no such thing as 'just,' because without people helping in the kitchen, that doesn't happen.

THE TROWEL: Meaning there really aren't insignificant jobs in a functioning Lodge.

TOTH: Right. A stated night or an emergent night is an event. The event starts with the meal. It doesn't start with the gavel dropping. The fraternity and the camaraderie - a lot of that happens around the supper table.

WHAT THE CRAFT TAUGHT THE COACH

THE TROWEL: After all your years in Masonry, what is one lesson the Craft has taught you that you wish you had understood years ago?

TOTH: Not everybody is going to have the same mindset and drive as Larry Toth. I've learned not to expect - or try to make - a whole bunch of Larry Toth clones.



An Evening with Worshipful Larry J. Toth, PM - continued

Everybody has his bailiwick - his own focus, drive and direction. It's my job as a coach and mentor to help him move in that direction.

THE FUTURE OF WINSTON LODGE

THE TROWEL: What question should I have asked that I didn't?

TOTH: What do I see as the future of Winston Lodge?

THE TROWEL: All right. What do you see?

TOTH: The future of Winston Lodge is to have a group of men where many of them are leaders in their own right. You don't have two or three. You have eight or nine leaders.

In my mind, the purpose of Masonry is not simply to make good men better. Making good men better is a side effect of creating a servant leader.

It would make me very happy if we got to a place where there were forty or fifty people in that Lodge. But the more people you get, the less engaged you can become with all of them.

As the Lodge grows, you have to make sure each person remains engaged. Different men will have different interests. If you don't remain engaged, people stop coming to Lodge.

THE MAN WHO HASN'T KNOCKED YET

THE TROWEL: That's where I think a strong public presence can matter. Before a man ever sits across the table from you, he may have already spent an evening reading The Trowel, looking through photographs, learning about the Lodge, and hearing Brothers talk about what Masonry means to them. Instead of seeing only a name and an address, he gets a glimpse of the life behind the door. Maybe that's enough to make the right man stop and ask himself, What am I missing?

TOTH: You've hit on something. When I'm vetting people, I ask questions and find out what their mindset is and what they might expect out of Masonry. Then I start feeding them little tidbits.

We need to show that we are relevant to today's man. What is he going to get out of it? The only way you can find that out is to start talking to somebody and find out what his mindset is. Then I match what Masonry has to what he expects to get out of it. And I'm not afraid to tell him, You're not going to find that here.

We have to make sure that the right people see that bug light and are attracted - come knock on our door. And when they ask, What's in it for me? we have to have an answer.



Three People for Lunch

THE TROWEL: Last question. You're having lunch with any three people who ever existed, dead or alive. Who gets the invitations?

TOTH: First of all, Jesus Christ. Second, somebody like Thomas Jefferson. And if the language barrier wasn't there, I would say Confucius.

THE TROWEL: Jesus and Confucius at the same table - that could be quite a conversation. And I hear Jesus does pretty well with the wine.

TOTH: It would be intense, but I would bet it wouldn't fall into argument.

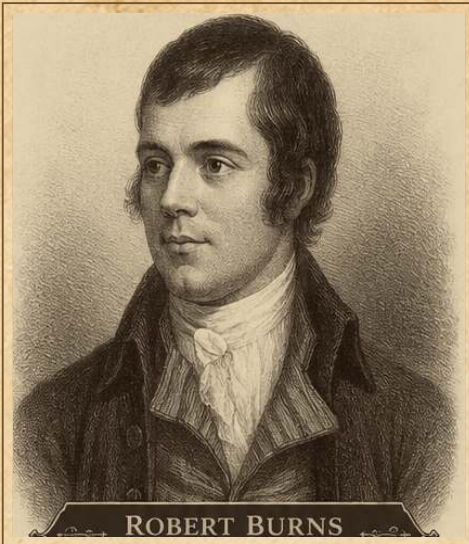




MASONIC EDUCATION

ROBERT BURNS

YOU ALREADY KNOW THIS BROTHER



ROBERT BURNS
ROBERT BURNS • 1759-1796

Poet, songwriter, and Freemason

THE MOUSE

The famous phrase is only the doorway. Burns was plowing a field when his plough destroyed a mouse's nest. Instead of treating the incident as insignificant, he imagined the event from the animal's point of view.

The mouse had prepared for winter. It had gathered what it needed. It had built itself a home. Then one pass of something vastly more powerful destroyed the whole thing.

Burns writes:

*"I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union"*

Burns does not just pity it. He recognizes another living creature whose small world has collided with human power. Later he calls the mouse his earth-born companion and fellow mortal.

Then comes the phrase that survived him:

*"The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley"*

In plain English: The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.

The mouse planned for winter. Burns himself made plans. We make plans. Yet none of us commands the whole field. Burns then goes one step further: the mouse suffers in the present; man remembers yesterday and worries about tomorrow.

For a Mason, there is something familiar in that movement of thought: humility before certainty, restraint in the exercise of power, sympathy with another creature, and an honest examination of ourselves.

Not bad for what one ruined mouse's nest can make a man think about.

THE MAN IS THE GOLD

Ten years later, Burns put another question before his readers: What is a man actually worth? Not his title. Not his coat. Not his money. Not the number of people who bow when he enters a room. The man himself.

In A Man's a Man for a' That, Burns writes:

*"The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that."*

A guinea was a gold coin. Burns's image is wonderfully simple:

Rank is just the stamp impressed upon the coin. The man himself is the gold.

A title may tell society where to place a man. It does not tell us what is inside him. Wealth, ribbons and social standing may distinguish one man from another in the eyes of the world, but they cannot manufacture integrity.

What is an eighteenth-century Scottish poet doing in a Masonic magazine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina? What does Robert Burns have to do with the price of tea in China?

At first glance, perhaps not very much.

Burns was born in Scotland in 1759, the son of a farmer. He died in 1796, long before Winston Lodge No. 167 - or Winston-Salem itself - existed. Yet there is a fair chance that you already know Robert Burns. You simply may not know that you know him.

Every New Year's Eve, when people join hands and sing Auld Lang Syne, Burns is there. The song had older folk roots, but Burns collected, adapted and extended the words associated with it. And if you have ever spoken of the best-laid plans of mice and men, Burns is there again. John Steinbeck took the title *Of Mice and Men* from Burns's 1785 poem *To a Mouse*.

Toward the end of the poem comes the great hope:

*"That man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that."*

That little Scots phrase - for a' that - matters. It does not mean because of all that. It means something closer to despite all that: notwithstanding the ranks, possessions, titles and artificial distinctions society places between us.

So the thought is: Man to man, the world over, shall yet be brothers - despite all that divides them.

AND YES - HE WAS A MASON

Burns was not merely a poet whose words happen to sound Masonic. He was a Freemason. His Masonic journey began on July 4, 1781, when he was initiated in Lodge St. David, Tarbolton. He remained deeply involved in the Craft and was serving as Senior Warden of Lodge St. Andrew in Dumfries near the end of his life.

His Masonic relationships became part of the network through which the young poet found readers, patrons and entry into Scottish literary society. That does not mean every noble thought Burns wrote should be stamped with a Square and Compasses. Burns was Burns before he became a convenient Masonic illustration.

But Freemasonry was genuinely part of his world. The University of Glasgow's Centre for Robert Burns Studies is now supporting a dedicated scholarly project examining Burns and Freemasonry, including his Masonic networks and the relationship between Masonic ideas and works such as *A Man's a Man for a' That*.

SO WHY BURNS? WHY HERE?

More than two centuries after his death, Robert Burns turns up in *The Trowel* in Winston-Salem - not because we needed a famous dead Mason to fill a page, but because the questions he asked have not gone anywhere.

What is a man worth? What does rank really mean? What do we owe the vulnerable when we possess greater power? How much control do we really have over the plans we so confidently make?

Can we look beyond station, occupation and title and recognize the man himself? And can man to man, the world over, despite all that divides us, still learn to be brothers?

*Perhaps that is what Robert Burns has to do with the price of tea in China.
Quite a bit, as it turns out.*

EXPLORE BURNS

*Read the poems. See the manuscripts.
Follow the Masonic scholarship.*

READ THE MAN HIMSELF

*To a Mouse • A Man's a Man for a' That • Auld Lang Syne
Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect.*

MANUSCRIPTS & MASONRY

Major manuscripts: National Library of Scotland. Current Burns/Freemasonry research: University of Glasgow Centre for Robert Burns Studies.



THE WORK CONTINUES

*Many hands. Many hearts. One Lodge.
Thank you.*

There are a great many people to thank. To the Brothers who show up Sunday and Monday, week after week, spending countless hours learning ritual and preparing degree work. To our Worshipful Master, for demonstrating that leadership in Masonry is as much about compassion and care for the Brethren as it is about occupying the East.

To the good Masons who have kept Winston Lodge alive since 1854, preserving something long enough for us to inherit it.

To the Temple Board, whose work keeps this beautiful building standing and functioning.

To the Brethren throughout our district, who give us examples, ideas, friendship and something to strive toward.

To the families and loved ones who patiently share their time with us while we give ours to the Craft.

And to the Brothers now sitting in the chairs and looking forward to moving through the line: thank you. Your willingness to continue that journey helps guarantee the future of Winston Lodge. That matters. It tells us there is still something here that men want to be part of.

And to the new Brothers joining Winston Lodge: welcome. We are glad you are here, and we will do our very best for you.

On a personal note, I am grateful to have found somewhere productive to direct a little of my madness. I have always loved walking into a room and discovering that I may be the least intelligent person in it. That puts me in an excellent position to learn something.

Finally, I would be particularly grateful to whichever Brother can provide a genuinely funny piece of Masonic humor for next month's issue. That was actually what was supposed to occupy this last page, but... oh well.

And speaking of next month, I understand Winston Lodge may now have a Lodge Historian. I look forward to his exhaustive history of Winston Lodge No. 167 in the September issue. Congratulations on the nomination, Brother.

Thanks,

Steven Miley

WOR. DAN SHEETS
Newsletter Contact / Editor

WOR. RONNIE VAUGHN
Newsletter Committee

WOR. LARRY TOTH
Newsletter Committee

BRO. STEVE MILEY
Ad Hoc Committee of One
August Issue

THIS IS YOUR LODGE. THIS IS YOUR PUBLICATION.
We'd love to hear from you.