

A Statement from the Lodge Historian

by Bro. Phillip W. Weiss

Acting in accordance with my responsibilities as Lodge Historian, I downloaded and printed out Arcana Lodge bulletins dating back to April 2011. This project yielded a document totaling approximately FIVE HUNDRED PAGES divided into four volumes. These volumes were produced solely for educational purposes and for the benefit of the Lodge, its members, and for Freemasonry in general.

This collection of Arcana Lodge bulletins contains a wealth of information about the Lodge, including its members, its activities, dates of meetings, commentary, photographs, and announcements. Considered in their totality, these bulletins convey a picture of an active Lodge that has continued to function even under the most challenging of circumstances.

It is a plausible estimate that if every Arcana Lodge bulletin dating back to the founding of the lodge in 1852 were placed in one pile, it would produce a document THOUSANDS OF PAGES thick, each page containing information about the Lodge and the brothers who comprised the Lodge membership at a particular moment in time. The same can be concluded about the minutes of the meetings of the Lodge, records encompassing almost three thousand meetings.

Regarding the disposition of documents of historical interest, these documents most appropriately belong in a library or other similar venues where documents are preserved and made available to others. Any brother in possession of documents of historical significance pertaining to the Lodge should consult with the Master as to how best to dispose of these documents.

It is incumbent that all Masonic lodges do their utmost to preserve their historical records. Preserving their historical records will allow future generations of Freemasons the opportunity to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the historical roots of these lodges and of the work performed by the brothers in these lodges at a given moment in time. For it is inside each lodge where Freemasons make their most important contributions to the craft, thus investing every lodge with a story worthy of note.

History has a vitally important place in Freemasonry. It provides a link to the past extending back to the construction of the King Solomon's Temple, the most revered and exalted edifice in Masonic practice. This makes the history of Arcana Lodge, and indeed the history of any well-governed lodge, not only educational and informative but sublime, and worthy of study, contemplation, and respect.

As further evidence of how the knowledge of Lodge history can strengthen the Lodge, included below is a recounting of certain events that took place in the Lodge in 1961. This commentary, pertaining to the incumbency of W.: Peter A. Leonforte, as Master of the Lodge in 1961, are an extract from the history of Arcana Lodge Number 246 published in 1977 in Arcana Lodge's one-hundred-twenty-fifth anniversary journal.

The Annual Communication of December 13, 1961, brought to our East a personality [Brother Leonforte] who bore the singular distinction of being the youngest Master to have served this office in the last decade. Age being no criterion, despite his youthfulness, he ruled and governed the Lodge with one avowed purpose in mind – “what is best for the Lodge.”

One regrettable incident took place at the Communication. W.: Sol S. Schatzberg announced that he would not be a candidate for Secretary again, an office he held for fourteen years. The reason he assigned was that the duties bore heavily upon his advancing years, and he was forced to curtail his activities somewhat. However, he assured the Lodge of his continued presence at future Communications. He received a standing ovation as tribute from the Lodge he served so zealously. The Master expressed his regrets and the Lodge unanimously elected W.: Sam Weiss to fill the Secretarial Post.

While 1961 was not a spectacular year in the sense of outstanding programs, it was nevertheless, a fruitful one in the growth of Arcana. Great stress was laid upon the Officers during this year for development of Lodge operations, to assure a continuity of future material which would grace our East. It is with excusable pride we record that our Lodge maintains a high degree of perfection on the Standard Ritual work.

Sixty-two years later, these events from 1961 are recounted by the son of the brother who became the Secretary of the Lodge so many decades before. This binding of the past with the present is another example of how a thorough knowledge of history of the Lodge can make the Lodge a more meaningful place for all the brothers who, whether they realize it or not, are writing a new chapter in the history of the Lodge with every meeting they attend, thus strengthening the Masonic bond between themselves and posterity.