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The History of Arcana Lodge, No. 246

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(Note: The list of worthy names associated with the history of Arcana Lodge No. 246 is almost endless. However, there was not enough space in this essay to mention every name. To those brothers whose names were not mentioned, the author humbly requests their understanding and forgiveness.)

We are Masons too, but where they erected buildings, we try to build men.

***Grand Lodge of
Free and Accepted Masons
of the State of New York***

Arcana Lodge was founded on January 19, 1852, when nine brothers, Charles A. Peck, John B. Breckenridge, Smith Mead, Henry C. Banks, William R. Stafford, Lyman Fisk, James H. Brush, Samuel Jenkins, and John Hayward, signed a petition requesting dispensation to form a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the City of New York, to be known as Arcana Lodge. The word Arcana means “secret things, or mysteries which it is forbidden to reveal.” (In 1936, the Grand Master of Masons of the State of New York, M.: W.: Jacob C. Klinck, explained why the founders selected the name Arcana:

The choosing of a name for any body of man is a serious matter, - especially so for a Masonic Lodge, and your brethren went back to their books of learning, they went back to the ages past to find a fitting name, and then, with the Masonic Principles in their hearts and with a consciousness of the History and Landmarks of the Craft, they selected Arcana, and in choosing that name they hoped and prayed their Lodge might foster and perpetuate those Masonic mysteries which they had learned to love.)

The petition, which was recommended by Lebanon, Eureka, and Joppa Lodges, was granted by M.: W.: Oscar Coles, Grand Master, on January 24, 1852. The first officers of the Lodge were Charles A. Peck, Master; William R. Stafford, Senior Warden; and John B. Breckenridge, Junior Warden.

The Lodge was duly organized and quickly went to work. On February 10, 1852, the Entered Apprentice Degree was conferred upon Lucius P. Hudson, Robert Milligan, Canston Brown and James Barker. Soon after, on March 5, 1852, Arcana received its charter from the

Grand Lodge, and by June 1852, the membership was 32, and in December had reportedly increased to 54.

In 1859, the fee for initiation was twenty-five dollars, and for affiliation ten dollars, payable previous to admission. The annual dues were five dollars, payable quarterly.

The founders of Arcana Lodge had intended to create a lodge of professional men (of the nine original petitioners, four were lawyers, one a dentist, one a physician, one a builder, and one a shoemaker), but instead of opting for elitism and exclusion, the Lodge chose the path of openness and diversity. Out of 45 members admitted the first year, only eleven were professionals.

Arcana continued to attract men from a wide range of backgrounds. W.: Philip Prichard, Master in 1855, 1858, and 1859, was a merchant; W.: James A. Kelly, Master in 1900 and 1901, was a carpenter, builder, and businessman. In 1911, the membership of Arcana Lodge included a Supreme Court Judge, a Parks Commissioner, the Surveyor for the Port of New York, and a City Magistrate. In 1955, candidates for membership included a manufacturer of wrought-iron furniture, a president of a chemical company, a retailer in sporting goods, a haberdashery salesman, a furniture dealer, a retail grocer, a salesman, a manufacturer of dials, a cosmetics salesman, a physician, an auto painter, an auto body repairman, and a city clerk.

Between 1852 and 1977, ninety-five brothers governed the Lodge. Their record of achievement is testimony to their commitment and devotion to the Lodge. W.: John T. Logan, a veteran of the Civil War, served as Master a record six times (1892-1894, 1897-1899) and was also Chaplain of the John Hancock Post, G.A.R. and one of its charter members. W.: C. DeForest Burns, W.: Louis J. Belloni, Jr., and W.: William A. Glover each served as Master four times (Bro. Burns, 1869-1871, and 1877; Bro. Belloni, 1872-1875; Bro. Glover, 1888-1891). W.: Charles H. Palmer, Master in 1904 and 1906, raised 35 to the rank of Master Mason. R.: W.: Charles Schenck, Master in 1902 and 1903, was appointed Grand Steward in 1913 and Grand Sword Bearer in 1914. He was also Treasurer of Arcana Lodge for a number of years. In 1919, W.: Walter A. Fribourg raised a total of 58. In 1925, W.: Lawrence M. J. Weining, Master in 1913, was elected Secretary of the Lodge, a position he held for twenty years. He succeeded W.: Isaac Van Benschoten, who had been Secretary of the Lodge since 1889, and Master in 1886 and 1887. W.: Ben Chassid, Master in 1944, served as Chairman of the Arcana Welfare Board. R.: W.: Max Rauch, Master in 1952, served as Junior and Senior Grand Deacon of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York, and Brotherhood Fund Chairman for the Third Manhattan District. W.: Sam Weiss, Master in 1955, served for many years as Secretary of Arcana Lodge. (On May 22, 1973, the Lodge held a dinner in W.: Bro. Weiss's honor. This event dramatically bespoke of the brethren's deep and profound gratitude for their longtime secretary's years of dedication and service to the Lodge. Commenting on the impressive

display of fraternal appreciation directed toward W.: Bro. Weiss, the Master, W.: Arnold Gray, later reported:

At our last communication we saw the biggest turnout of Brothers in a long time. They came primarily to honor W.: Sam Weiss and this filled lodge room was the greatest tribute that could have been paid to him. Speaker after speaker had the finest things to say about our Secretary, but I am sure the large turnout was to him the most rewarding part of the evening. ... I am sure that this was one night that Sam will never forget.)

Since its founding in 1852, the history of Arcana Lodge has been marked by many wonderful and notable events, each exemplifying Arcana's commitment to the Masonic principles of charity and fraternity.

For instance:

1. On May 4, 1900, the Rev. Donald Sage MacKay, D.D., minister of the Fifth Avenue Collegiate Church, delivered a lecture entitled "Quaint Characters in Auld Scotland" for the benefit of the Arcana Charity fund. The entertainment netted a profit of \$501.50. (At that time Arcana Lodge was heavily in debt, but through the efforts of the Master, W.: James A. Kelly, good work was begun, and by the end of the year fourteen candidates had been initiated and every dollar of the debt had been liquidated.)
2. On June 14, 1913, the Masonic Standard, in an article extolling the rapid growth of Arcana Lodge, reported:

A Lodge that has made notable progress during the past ten or twelve

years is Arcana No. 246. On Dec. 31, 1900, the Lodge had a membership of 71. At the last report to the Grand Lodge, Dec. 31, 1912, there were 250 members. The communications are well attended, and there is great activity and interest in the Lodge, which has taken its place among the leaders in good Masonic work. The present condition of the Lodge is due in large measure to the earnestness and zeal of the brethren who have presided over its destinies.

3. In March 28, 1917, Arcana Lodge concluded the celebration of its 65th anniversary with a grand banquet and ball at the Hotel McAlpin. More than 800 participated at this event. As later reported, at the conclusion of dinner,

the Master, W.: Bro. Joseph E. Lauber, spoke of the relationship which exists between Masonry and humanity at large, taking up the question of loyalty and fidelity to the Government, and the strengthening influence of Masonry in times of national crisis.

4. On March 19, 1927, during a Dinner and Dance at the Hotel Pennsylvania celebrating our Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, Arcana Lodge, with W.: Jacob O. Solow as Master, presented to the R.: W.: Charles H. Johnson, Senior Grand Warden, a \$1,000 bond as Arcana's gift to the Third District Tuberculosis Fund, which is held in trust by the Grand Lodge; more than 1,000 were in attendance.
5. On April 24, 1928, Arcana celebrated its Fifteen Hundredth Communication. After the close of business, the Lodge was

entertained with music furnished by the String Quartette from the Philharmonic Orchestra, and vocal selections from Mr. Cuthberg, basso soloist of St. Bartholomew's Church. About 600 brothers, including visitors, attended. At this event, the three oldest members of the Lodge, Bros. Max Goebel, raised in 1869; Thomas Simpson, raised in 1880; and G. G. Kimpel, raised in 1887, were introduced from the East. W.: Samuel W. Phillips was Master.

6. On February 12, 1935, Arcana Lodge, with W.: Oscar Yeager as Master, celebrated the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. At this celebration, the Gettysburg Address was read by Bro. George Schachter, and an address on "Lincoln 'The' American" was delivered by Captain and Bro. Henry B. Wolfson.
7. On March 26, 1935, at Mecca Temple, over 600 attended to witness a rededication of Arcana Lodge to good brotherhood and genuine friendship. W.: Oscar Yeager was Master.
8. On February 11, 1941, Arcana Lodge, with W.: Alfred H. Bishara as Master, again celebrated the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. An overwhelming turnout witnessed the proceedings. The Gettysburg Address was delivered by W.: Charles S. M. First, and Bro. Rabbi Charles J. Abeles spoke on Lincoln, "The Statesman."
9. On October 13, 1942, W.: Charles F. M. First recited a Memoriam commemorating the life of the late Bro. Seymour Morton Schatzburg (January 12, 1919-September 19, 1942) who made the

Supreme Sacrifice in the defense of freedom during World War Two. The entire Lodge was profoundly saddened by the loss of this heroic Brother. That same year the Pilot Officer Seymour Morton Schatzburg Memorial Fund was inaugurated.

W.: Theodore F. Gieselberg was Master.

10. On March 23, 1948, with W.: George W. Weiner as Master, there occurred an “Event of Events.” Before a filled Lodge Room, Bro. “Papa Paul Stone” raised his five sons and four sons-in-laws. All present were spellbound through the entire performance.

11. On October 25, 1949, Arcana Lodge held a “Past Masters Night.” At this remarkable event, all the Stations and Places were occupied by Arcana’s Past Masters, who were assisted by other Arcana Past Masters. About this event, the Master,

W.: Michael J. Woolf, wrote:

Space does not permit to mention by name every Past Master who took part in the work on Past Masters Night, October 25th. However, I cannot refrain from mentioning Charlie First, as he graced the East, in a most proficient manner; Sam Phillips, one of the most perfect ritualists in the State; Billy Gieselberg, always a pleasure to listen to his instructions. In short, every Past Master of our lodge performed in traditional Masonic and Arcana Fashion.

Your Master and the sideliners are truly grateful for a wonderful evening.

12. On May 9, 1950, the R.: W.: Abraham E. Hyman, assisted by his son, W.: E. Sidney Hyman, who occupied the West, and grandson, Bro. Victor J. Hyman, who occupied the South, conferred the Sublime Degree of Master Mason upon duly qualified Brother Fellowcraft. Also assisting was W.: Samuel W. Phillips who filled the Senior Deacon's chair. It was the first time in the history of Arcana Lodge that a Grandfather, his son and his grandson performed such work. Commenting on this "Three Generations Night," the Master, W.: Norbert J. Kopins, reported:

It was indeed a treat to witness R.: W.: Abraham E. Hyman confer the degree in his usual eloquent and efficient manner, assisted by his colleagues of yesteryear. I know Abe felt thrilled and honored, when he witnessed the splendid attendance in Arcana. It only goes to prove how we feel about our beloved brother, and I sincerely trust that we have the joy of his association with us for many, many years to come.

13. On March 8, 1952, Arcana Lodge, with R.: W.: Max Rauch as Master, celebrated its One-Hundredth Anniversary at the Astor Hotel, which was attended by over 600 guests, including members of the Grand Lodge. At this event, a check for \$1,000 was presented to the then Grand Master, M.: W.: Richard A. Rowlands, for the Brotherhood Fund.
14. In June 1952, The Pilot Officer Seymour M. Schatzberg Memorial Fund of Arcana Lodge was incorporated. Between 1954 and 1961, the Fund disbursed over \$13,000 for 15 Scholarship

Awards and more than \$400 for other charitable endeavors. At the same time the assets of the Fund increased by \$10,000. On February 16, 1961, the U.S. Treasury Department certified the Fund as a charitable organization.

15. On April 14, 1953, the Hon. Abraham D. Beame, Director of the Budget of the City of New York and later Mayor, honored Arcana Lodge with an address about the financial condition of the city. The topic struck a cord among the brethren and guests who were present. The Master, W.: Milton L. Kern, later reported:

Room 710 was filled to capacity with 100 members and guests enjoying their dinner and the company of their brothers. Our guest of the evening, the Hon. Abraham D. Beame, was a speaker with a deep knowledge of his subject and the ability to transmit that knowledge to his audience. The lively discussion which followed his address could have gone on long into the night. Of necessity we were forced to terminate it. However, that did not stop the private discussions which continued long afterwards.

16. On February 9, 1954, with W.: George Tanz as Master, Brother Henry Epstein, then Deputy Mayor of New York City, and later a Justice of the Supreme Court, delivered a talk on "Formation of Good Government." Brother Epstein received a warm welcome and a standing ovation at the conclusion of his remarks.
17. In May 1955, Arcana brethren and their families enjoyed a Memorial Day Weekend Outing at the President Hotel, Swan Lake, New York. This event was completely sold out. The

Communication dated May 17, 1955, predicted: “This promised to be a never-to-be-forgotten weekend. Imagine the gaiety and splendor that will prevail when Arcana takes over the President Hotel.” This prediction was correct. Regarding this event, the Master, W.: Sam Weiss, later reported:

Our Third Annual Memorial Weekend Party at the President Hotel, in Swan Lake was a tremendous success. The project was initiated by W.: George Weiner in 1953, and should be a “MUST” for all future achievements in Arcana. Under the able guidance of W.: Mac Rauch and his very capable committee we were all treated to 3 grand and glorious days of entertainment, delicious food and spectacular gifts to our Brethren, their ladies and friends.

The marvelous time every one had assures us that any future plans for a Fourth Annual Weekend Party will even supercede the success of this one.

To the Chairman W.: Mac Rauch and his committee – Orchids for a job well done. God bless you.

18. On May 26, 1959, with W.: Philip Margolin as Master, a dramatic event occurred. The R.: W.: Eugene S. Muller, District Deputy Grand Master of the Third Manhattan District, announced that the Grand Master had appointed W.: George Tanz to be District Deputy Grand Master of the Third Manhattan District for the years 1959-1960, the first time in Arcana’s history that the lodge had been so honored. The response was tumultuous. An observer reported:

The usual decorum maintained by the Master was beyond his control. The applause was deafening: Shouts of “bravo, “bravo” were heard, and brother after brother sought the floor to express their gratification. They were unanimous in their praise, and their predictions that he would discharge his duties as District Deputy with grace and dignity were prophetic.

(Other Arcana brothers who were to be so honored were R.: W.:

Stanley Aronowitz, D.D.G.M, 1966-1967; R.: W.: Milton Kern,

D.D.G.M, 1973-1974; R.: W.: Marvin Kerr, D.D.G.M., 1976-1977:

R.: W.: Jay L. Austin, D.D.G.M., 1985-1986; and R.: W.: Laurence

Austin, D.D.G.M, 1989-1990.)

19. On November 19, 1966, Arcana Lodge held its annual Ladies Night. The festivities took place at the Copacabana, 10 East 60th Street, New York City. The program included a cocktail, full course dinner and a Broadway show. The total cost to the member was \$13 for himself and his Lady, with the Lodge underwriting a good part of the cost. Regarding this event, the Master, W.: Victor N. Payne, reported:

Arcana’s annual Ladies Night, held at the Copacabana, was a great success. The food, music, and superb stage show earned glowing compliments from the more than three hundred Arcana brethren and their ladies who attended. The evening proved once again that we gain as much enjoyment from being in each others company, as from the entertainment provided. I am sure that you all join with me in extending sincere thanks to W.: Phil Margolin, chairman, and W.: Ben Chassid for the

many hours they spent in planning and arranging this outstanding evening for our enjoyment.

20. On May 9, 1972, Arcana Lodge honored one of its most popular and gifted brothers, W.: Philip Margolin. The lodge was filled to overflowing. Attending this event was an impressive array of delegations including M.: W.: Frank C. Staples, Past Grand Master and R.: W.: Vincent J. D'Aversa, District Deputy Grand Master. R.: W.: George Levy provided a description of each of the Noble delegations of Mecca Temple, and R.: W.: Mac Rauch, R.: W.: Benjamin Chassid, and W.: Marvin Kerr spoke in glowing terms about the W.: Bro. Margolin's activities in the Lodge and some of the personal relationships he had developed over the years. There were two musical interludes from the Shrine Oriental Band. After the ceremonies, the Lodge was called to give Grand Honors for the first time to R.: W.: Ben Chassid, the newly appointed Grand Representative of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, near the Grand Lodge of New York. The Master, W.: Stanley Stein, described the communciation honoring W.: Bro. Margolin as "a night to remember."

21. On September 25, 1973, Arcana Lodge held reception ceremonies honoring its third District Deputy Grand Master, R.: W.: Milton Kern. Approximately 120 Arcana and visiting brethren attended this event. This event was evidence of the high esteem in which

R.: W.: Bro. Kern was held by the brethren in the Lodge and the Third Manhattan District. The Master, W.: Arnold Gray, described this event as follows:

At our last communication we had a Reception honoring the R.: W.: Milton Kern. The lodge room was packed with brethren of Arcana Lodge, the Third Manhattan District and many other Masonic guests. Speaker after speaker praised the work that Milton had done in the past, and wished him a most successful year. I know that he will do the best possible job and Arcana Lodge will be proud of him.

22. On October 2, 1973, the Master, W.: Arnold Gray, reported that in June he had visited the Masonic Home in Utica, New York, and “felt proud entering the grounds of the home knowing that Arcana Lodge had gone well over its quota this year with contributions totaling \$3,615.25.”

23. On April 23, 1977, Arcana Lodge celebrated its One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary at the Queensboro Hill Jewish Center, Flushing, New York. Honoring Arcana with their presence were M.: W.: Frank C. Staples, Past Grand Master of Masons of the State of New York and R.: W.: William R. Punt, Deputy Grand Master of Masons of the State of New York. Regarding what this momentous event meant to the Lodge, the Master, W.: Harvey Klein, wrote:

Tonight’s event marks one of profound importance. It signifies the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of

Arcana Lodge . . . a full century and a quarter of the brotherhood, devotion and charity of Freemasonry. If tonight our pride is great, our humility is truly deep.

In terms of the Craft, we are a young organization. But to have been a part of this illustrious movement for one hundred and twenty five years is a very great honor to Arcana Lodge, to us, who today, help keep its meaningful spirit and activities alive. It is truly our good fortune to be part of this everlasting experience.

24. On May 25, 1982, Arcana Lodge, in an impressive display of Masonic gratitude and appreciation, honored R.: W.: Max Rauch for his many years of service to the Craft. Commenting about this exceptionally gifted Brother, the Master, W.: Julius Levere, wrote:

Such a Brother is being honored here this evening, for to write the history of Arcana Lodge these past 38 years is to find the name of Mac Rauch interwoven in every aspect of every activity of Arcana Lodge.

From his first entrance into the Lodge in 1944, his interest, his energy and outstanding talents was apparent to everyone. He has not stopped working and serving, to this very day.

Present at this special event were representatives from the Third Manhattan District and the Grand Lodge, including three past Grand Masters and the then current Grand Master, the M.: W.: Ernest Leonardi. (So esteemed was R.: W.: Max Rauch that a poem was written about him. It reads as follows:

**There are men, who can mountains move;
If the hills, others will help to remove:
There are few, who can both these things do;
As well as he, and with perfection too.)**

25. On October 8, 1985, R.: W.: Jay L. Austin, was honored with the Purple Circle. Regarding this event, the Master, W.: Krikor B. Drigian (who also served as Master in 1984 and 1990), reported:

Never before in recent times has Arcana Lodge No. 246, shown an outpouring of spirit when one of its brothers was honored with the Purple Circle.... The evening of October 8, 1985, will be long cherished.

26. On October 10, 1989, with W.: Jerome Siskin as Master, Arcana Lodge held a reception honoring R.: W.: Laurence Austin, Deputy District Grand Master of the Third Manhattan District and father of R.: W.: Jay L. Austin. Attending this event were several Third District and Grand Lodge representatives, including two past Grand Masters, M.: W.: William R. Punt and M.: W.: Frank C. Staples. W.: Andrei Kulyk, who served three terms as Master of Arcana (in 1987, 1988, and 1991) provided the musical selection.

27. On November 8, 1994, during a "Bring-A-Friend-Night," R.: W.: Brent Blacksborg and Bro. (later Worshipful) Charles Betz discussed the topic of Masonry. The Master, W.: Robert S. Phillips, reported that their talks "left a lasting impression on all of us."

28. On February 28, 1995, with W.: Robert S. Phillips as Master, three notable events occurred. First, Masonic birthdays were celebrated for twenty-one Arcana brethren. They were :

Irving Mencher	70 years
Murray Crane	55 years
R.: W.: Milton Kern	50 years
Joseph Indig	50 years
W.: Jerry Siskin, DSA	45 years
W.: Peter Leonforte	45 years
Harold Cohen	45 years
Leonard Lessing	45 years
Robert Leland	45 years
Charles Linz	40 years
Oscar Machlis	40 years
Seymour Weissman	40 years
W.: A. Brent Blacksburg	35 years
W.: B. Michael Grosz	35 years
Joseph Weiniger	35 years
George Mayor	35 years
W.: Arnold Gray	30 years
Abraham Williger	25 years
Stephen Bigman	25 years
W.: Arthur Klansky	20 years
Robert Cohen	20 years

Second, it was “Step up night,” in which all the officers of the Lodge advanced one, or even two chairs for the evening. And third, the W.: Master informed the Lodge that W.: Arthur Klansky had been selected by the Grand Master of Masons of the State of New York to receive the “Distinguished Service Award.” It was a superb night for the Lodge and especially for W.: Bro. Klansky, who was afforded the recognition and honor he so justly deserved.

29. On September 28, 1999, Bro. Phillip Weiss gave a talk on the history of Arcana Lodge. Regarding this event, the Master, W.: Seth Zolot, reported:

September 28th brought a real treat.
Bro. Phillip Weiss prepared a history of the

first 125 years of Arcana Lodge, culled from his father's notes. It was obvious that this treatise was a labor of love. Bro. Weiss recounted our history, which has spanned from the Civil War through Vietnam and beyond, and enlightened us as to the heroism of some of our brethren.

In more recent years, Arcana Lodge has continued its fine tradition of producing outstanding Masons. W.: Arthur Klansky, Master in 1986 and 1993, became a trustee of Arcana Lodge and 3rd Vice-President on the Executive Board of the Seventh Manhattan District; W.: Edward Zwillick, Master in 1996, was elected to the Board of Directors of the Seventh District Association; V.: W.: Stephen Kastner, Master in 1997 and an outstanding ritualist and Masonic lecturer, was elevated to the office of Grand Sword Bearer for the Grand Lodge of the State of New York; W.: Robert Schor, Master in 1998, became a trustee of the Lodge and a director of the Seventh District Association; W.: Seth Zolot, Master in 1999, became the Secretary of Arcana Lodge; R.: W.: Joseph Homer was promoted to Junior Grand Deacon of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York; and R.: W.: Laurence I. Sussman was appointed District Deputy Grand Master for the Seventh Manhattan District and became a member of Arcana's Special Projects Committee (along with Brothers Jerry Butkow and Dr. Joe LoPinto). Their accomplishments epitomize the highest standards of Masonic excellence.

Arcana Lodge has a long and honorable record of devotion to those brothers who served in the Armed Forces of the United States. During

World War One, Arcana did its bit in looking after the needs of members and sons of members in the Armed Forces. On January 31, 1921, Arcana Lodge, led by W.: Sol S. Schatzberg, appropriated a sum in excess of \$4,500 to the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital in Utica, New York, to furnish a room which bears the name "Arcana Lodge, No. 246, Free & Accepted Masons." Regarding Arcana's contribution to the defense of our country, W.: Samuel W. Phillips, wrote:

We are proud of our war record. During the [first] 100 years of our existence our country was engaged in five distinct wars – the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, and the Korean Conflict. In each of these wars our Lodge can boast of members who actually served in these conflicts with honor and distinction. During World War II, in addition, the members of our Lodge raised many thousands of dollars to support all the war work and carry out the programs of the Grand Lodge. We took care of the needs of over 200 of our brothers, their sons and daughters in the Armed Forces, including wounded soldiers and prisoners of war. One brother, Seymour Morton Schatzberg, enlisted in the Royal Air Force, before our country became actively involved in World War II, and made the Supreme Sacrifice that we may live in a free world.

In 1919 and 1946, Arcana Lodge gave Victory dinners to honor the brothers who had served in the military. Arcana's 1,800th Communication took place on May 8, 1945 - V.E. Day.

Through the years Arcana Lodge continued to perform its Masonic work with diligence and distinction. The 1980s and early 1990s were a particularly challenging time for Arcana as dwindling membership

threatened to undermine the viability of the Lodge. However, led by W.: Arthur Klansky, Arcana experienced what Bro. Klansky described as a “renaissance” as efforts to create a more dynamic and better-attended Lodge bore fruit. By January 1995, the drive to gain new members was so successful that the Master, W.: Robert S. Phillips, announced that the Lodge would devote two nights for each degree. For instance, on January 24, 1995, Arcana initiated six new brothers as Entered Apprentices. (The degree work was performed in Arcana’s usual superb manner. Commenting on what he had observed, the Master, W.: Robert S. Phillips, later wrote: “Arcana Lodge exemplified what is positive in Masonry, and it made me proud to be a Mason.”) In October 1999, W.: Seth Zolot could write:

We have a third degree scheduled for October 26th. This is a well deserving class of fellowcrafts. They have been very active already, and I am looking forward to having them as full 3rd degree Masons.

After several months of discussion and debate, Arcana, led by W.: Robert Schor and then by W.: Seth Zolot, voted unanimously on September 14, 1999, to merge with Elbe-Garfield-Goelet Lodge No. 889 and join the Seventh Manhattan District, thus ending its long and illustrious affiliation with the Third Manhattan District. During this meeting, the caliber of discussion reached a new level of sophistication as brother after brother offered free-flowing commentary on matters of utmost importance to the Lodge. For one brother, this meeting represented Arcana Lodge “at

its best.” W.: Seth Zolot, who, as Master, presided over the meeting, wrote:

There was heated debate..., yet, after all
was said and done, we were able to appreciate
each other’s opinions. Democracy in action, and
all with the best interest of the Lodge at heart.... I
love it.

On September 22, 1999, Elbe-Garfield-Goelet voted in favor of the merger and on November 4, 1999, the M.: W.: Stewart C. McCloud, Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York, approved the merger. Arcana Lodge had been reborn. At a gala dinner held on November 10, 1999, to celebrate the appointment of R.: W.: Myer V. Rossabi to the office of Grand Steward of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York, the merger was formally announced.

On November 23, 1999, Arcana Lodge held its final meeting in the Doric Room. The events that transpired that evening befitted the significance of the occasion. W.: Julius Levere, Master in 1965, 1982 and 1992, shared his thoughts about the Lodge; W.: Arthur Klansky, in an oratorical *tour de force*, discussed what the Doric Room meant to him; and Bro. Phillip Weiss gave a “short talk” about the history of Arcana Lodge and then recited a poem composed especially for the occasion. The poem was as follows:

Arcana Lodge,
a beautiful lodge indeed.
So noble, so fine,
so great and so free.

It began long ago,
a small acorn,
a seed almost unseen.

Then grew over
the years
into a tree
with many leaves.

It bore much
good fruit,
year in and year out.
A triumph of success,
so strong and so stout.

But with the passing
of years
came inevitable change
that even Arcana
would have to obey.

The change has occurred
and so far it is good.
Arcana is transformed,
its name still endures.

But no matter what happens,
Arcana will always be great,
it has its own history,
it has its own place.

Now it's time to move on,
time to leave this good room,
an era has ended,
farewell Doric Room.

The meeting was permeated by a spirit of fraternal goodwill and ended with Masonic fellowship abounding.

Inspired by R.: W.: Myer V. Rossabi, the first Master of the “new” Arcana Lodge, Masonic brothers from two formerly separate lodges, now together under one roof, quickly formed bonds of friendship which bode well for the future of the merger. This was a most auspicious sign of better things to come. For the newly reconstituted Arcana Lodge, full of vigor and brimming with confidence, a new era had begun.

AFTERWORD

On December 8, 1999, Arcana Lodge met for the first time in the French Doric Room. Although new to this room, the Lodge quickly settled into its new home and proceeded to conduct its work of the evening. Thirty brothers were in attendance. District Deputy Grand Master Stanley H. Brill visited the hall and extended to Arcana a warm Masonic welcome to the Seventh Manhattan District. For the “new” Arcana Lodge it was an excellent start.

Since that start, Arcana Lodge has flourished. Many significant events have occurred. For instance:

1. On January 12, 2000, Arcana Lodge organized a hugely successful “Bring a Friend Night.” Twenty five brothers attended this event along with five new prospective members.
2. On March 8, 2000, Arcana participated in the Grand Lecturer’s Convention hosted by Perfect Square Lodge in the Colonial Room. The Convention was a great success with 32 brothers in attendance, including Bros. Guy Caterina and Nick Natoli who represented Arcana Lodge.
3. On March 22, 2000, Arcana hosted the Deputy District Grand Master visitation. The event was both a Masonic and culinary success. The Master, R.: W.: Myer V. Rossabi, later reported:

On March 22, over 40 of our brothers (including 3 EAs) hosted the DDGM, the

Staff Officer, the RWs of the District and the other lodges to a delicious Italian dinner consisting of sausage & pepper & onions, stuffed shells, eggplant rollatini, chicken marsala with mushrooms, penne with vodka sauce, veal scaloppini with mushrooms, potato croquettes, garlic knots and salad with mozzarella cheese. After dinner, 87 Masons packed our French Doric Room to capacity. Bro. Bruce Zayde entertained us on the organ. It was really a night to remember.

Coffee, tea and delicious Italian pastry were served after the visitation. The “clean-up” team was also very helpful.

- 4. On June 14, 2000, six worthy Fellowcraft were raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.**

In September 2000, serious health problems forced the Master, R.: W.: Myer V. Rossabi, to temporarily step down from the East. The mantel of leadership was then passed to the Senior Warden, Bro. Victor Amodeo, who became Acting Master. So successfully did Bro. Amodeo meet the challenge of leadership during the Wor. Master’s absence, that on May 23, 2001, he was elected as the Master of Arcana Lodge, the 112th brother to be so honored.

A brief word about Arcana’s current Master. W.: Victor Amodeo is uniquely qualified to occupy that lofty place of honor in the East. In addition to being highly proficient in Masonic ritual and being completely devoted to the Lodge, W.: Bro. Amodeo is an expert in Masonic history. In October 1994, then Master, W.: Robert W. Phillips, reported:

For those of you who were not present, at our last meeting Fellowcrafts John Lentinello and James Lombardo were allowed to ask some questions. This led to a spirited impromptu lecture by Bros Victor Amodeo and Seth Zolot on Masonic History, most notably in regards to a possible connection between Freemasonry and the Knights Templar of the Middle Ages; Bro. Amodeo was particularly impressive in his knowledge of the topic.

With W.: Bro. Amodeo at the helm, Arcana Lodge has continued to perform its Masonic work in a manner fully consistent with its well-established record of Masonic excellence. Events such as the annual Father's Day Brunch, the annual A. Brent Blacksburg picnic at Tallman State Park, the annual day at Shea Stadium (which included a well-attended tail-gate party), and other social activities have strengthened the ties of fraternal camaraderie that has always been a well-known feature of the Arcana experience.

On November 14, 2001, two momentous events occurred. First, before a packed room, which included many honored representatives from the other Lodges of the Seventh Manhattan District, R.: W.: Carl Fitji, the Deputy Grand Master of Masons of the State of New York, became an honorary member of Arcana Lodge. All in attendance were delighted and enthralled. Honoring us with a speech, R.: W.: Fitji recounted the history of Arcana Lodge, and counseled the audience to instill among the brethren an appreciation of Masonic history as a means of maintaining and promoting interest and participation in the Craft. All present were transfixed by R.: W.: Fitji's thoughtful and inspiring words. At the conclusion of the

address, the entire hall responded with thunderous applause. Afterward, there followed a most dramatic presentation. With the Lodge again settled in a state of dignified repose, the Master, W.: Victor Amodeo, turned to the South and expressed his gratitude to the Junior Warden, Bro. Vincent Scandole for wartime service rendered on behalf of his country as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States. These remarks were immediately greeted with a standing ovation, testimony to Arcana's unswerving devotion to country and its steadfast commitment to service in the defense of democracy, equality, and freedom.

Then, on November 28, 2001, two other important events occurred. First, as actual evidence of Arcana's success in attracting new candidates for membership, Arcana elected eight petitioners to become members of the Lodge. After completing this work, a large delegation from Arcana Lodge traveled to Joshua Lodge to attend the memorial for the esteemed District Deputy Grand Master for the Seventh Manhattan District, R.: W.: Stanley Brill. Numerous dignitaries from the Seventh Manhattan District participated in this salute to R.: W.: Bro. Brill, including Arcana's R.: W.: Lawrence I. Sussman, D.D.G.M., who offered eloquent commentary appropriate for the occasion.

Next, on December 3, 2001, Arcana Lodge, with the other Seventh District Lodges participating, conducted a First Degree in the Joshua Lodge French Ionic Room. So successful were the efforts of the district to attract new members that by the latter half of the year, fifteen worthy

candidates from all five Lodges in the district were on the trestle board awaiting initiation into the Craft. That night, eight of those worthy candidates were raised to the degree of Entered Apprentice. The lodge room was crowded almost to capacity. Arcana's own V.: W.: Stephen Kastner officiated in the East. This most extraordinary Brother performed his Masonic work in his usual splendid manner. V.: W.: Bro. Kastner's performance was again proof that Arcana Lodge is indeed fortunate to have among its members such an exceptionally talented Brother.

Central to Arcana's program was the planning for the 150th Anniversary celebration. Needless to say, these preparations generated much excitement within the Lodge as the brethren, aware of the significance of this landmark event, awaited the celebration with bated breath and much anticipation. Ably assisted in the West by the Senior Warden, Bro. Joseph Bonsignore, who served as Sponsorship Chairman for the 150th Anniversary Committee, and in the South by the Junior Warden, Bro. Vincent Scandole, who put together the 150th Anniversary Journal, as well as by many other brothers in the Lodge, the Master, W.: Victor Amodeo, acted in a most proficient manner to assure that Arcana's 150th Anniversary Celebration would be an outstanding success.

Throughout its history, Arcana Lodge has demonstrated time and again through the actions of its worthy brothers that Freemasonry still has an important place in our society. Arcana's record of service remains unblemished and unbroken. In 1927, Arcana Lodge celebrated its 75th

anniversary; in 1952, its 100th anniversary; in 1977, its 125th anniversary, and in 2002, its 150th anniversary, each celebration affirming Arcana's commitment to the Masonic principles of charity and fraternal good will.

Reflecting on Arcana's role in society, W.: Victor Amodeo wrote:

As we enter our 150th year, our President George W. Bush has before him a set of new challenges. And we as Freemasons and members of Arcana lodge can make our continued contribution by raising men to become the leaders and good citizens of tomorrow.

If one can predict the future based upon past accomplishments, then Arcana Lodge should continue to make important contributions to the civic life of our community and to the advancement of Freemasonry.

Membership in Arcana Lodge has inspired countless words of gratitude and praise from numerous brothers who over the years have graced the halls of our Lodge. One brother expressed his feelings in a manner so eloquent and succinct as to merit its reproduction here in its entirety. In 1984, after being presented his Fifty Year Masonic Birthday Pin, Brother David Karp, then 90 years old, a Navy veteran and hero from World War One, and a life member of Arcana Lodge, wrote the following:

Dear most respected and honored fraternal friend, Grand Secretary, Rt. W. Wendell E Walker,

Thank you – Thank you from the bottom of my heart, for mailing my 50 year Masonic Birthday Pin to Wor. Master Louis E Smith III – of South Miami Lodge #308 who delivered it in person to me in my home in Florida with his Sec'y.

“My Cup Runneth Over!”

I am crying with Joy but with emotion as I write this as I am 90 years and am trying to cope with a Bad eye and wear an Ear-Aid.

May I wish you and your office assistance again, - a fraternal Thank you and a Healthy – happy New Year and God’s 3 fold Blessing till 120 years.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,
Lillian and David Karp

WISDOM FROM THE EAST

Freemasonry is a philosophy of life that offers a genuine, unequivocal, and practical framework for human conduct, based on the sublime and universally accepted tenets that provide the foundation for personal and spiritual growth. In Arcana Lodge, the nature and meaning of these tenets and their relevance to Freemasonry and everyday life has often been the subject for serious and profound contemplation. As a result, over a span of one and half centuries, encompassing over 2,600 communications and participation in countless charitable and social events, Arcana Lodge has compiled a rich intellectual and philosophical legacy.

In Arcana Lodge, as in all Masonic lodges, the Worshipful Master, in the lofty words of the Grand Lodge, “has complete executive power, and controls the operation of the Lodge at all times.” However, the Worshipful Master is also a teacher and a role model for other Brothers to follow.

Every Master of Arcana Lodge has performed in that pedagogical capacity. Indeed, the history of Arcana Lodge is replete with examples of the sagacious commentary that has emanated over the years from the East. For instance, consider the brilliant and beautifully written pronouncements that were proffered by three of our Past Masters, W.: Victor N. Payne, W.: Stanley Aronowitz, and W.: Jerry Verringia, and by our current Master, W.: Victor C. Amodeo. In 1964, using his World War Two experience in India as a point of reference and citing the poetry of fellow Mason, Bro. Rudyard Kipling, W.: Bro. Aronowitz offered anecdotal evidence to demonstrate how Freemasonry can transcend powerful and ingrained social and racial barriers, even in a caste-dominated and foreign-subjugated society, to bring disparate groups of people together under the banner of unity, harmony, and fraternal goodwill. W.: Bro. Aronowitz wrote:

To me, one of the most inspiring examples of the leveling influence of Freemasonry is found in Bro. Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The Mother Lodge."

During World War Two I spent some months in India, and one of the strongest impressions left with me, was the strict and almost unbreakable divisions of race and caste. That the British soldier generally regarded the native population with contempt is no secret. The dislike and distrust amongst the different nationalities, religions and castes, was just as evident. In the period Kipling writes about, these divisive forces must have even been stronger.

Yet Kipling writes of a Lodge in the India of his time, where British soldiers, English civil servants, a Hindu Brahmin, a Hindu of lower caste, a Parsee, a Sikh, a Hebrew, a Roman Catholic, and others, met together in peace and harmony, and called each other Brother.

That this could take place in the India of the 1880s is staggering, and to me proof that the principles of our Fraternity surely has the strength to move mountains!

In 1966, pondering on what it means to be a real Mason, W.: Bro. Payne offered the following thought:

A Master Mason's wages are as large as he wants them to be. The only question asked is, "Can you earn the wages you ask?" These wages are earned by what a Mason does with his mind and heart, not with his hands. He receives for his labor uncounted coins of happiness, satisfaction, and understanding. Let he who would receive all that Freemasonry has to give, dig deeply into the symbolism, history, and spiritual meaning of our ancient craft.

Then, and only then, will he become a real Mason – free to travel in foreign countries and receive a Master's wages.

That same year, W.: Bro. Payne also offered insightful commentary on what Freemasonry needs to do to attract and keep new members:

Freemasonry is very old. It has survived for centuries because it is founded upon basic truths, because its teachings are timeless and relevant to every age, and because it satisfies some of the deepest of all human needs. It has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to adapt itself to changing conditions.

We must remember, however, that Freemasonry, like other similar institutions, must sell itself anew to each succeeding generation. It cannot exist forever upon its past history alone, nor upon the accomplishments of those great men who have been members of our Fraternity in the past. To survive, Freemasonry must continue to merit and to enjoy the respect and confidence of society, and to attract men of the right type and calibre to appreciate and understand its teachings and carry on its work.

Individual Freemasons and Lodges have a responsibility in this matter. Without violating any of the traditional Masonic restrictions, they must somehow manage to convince the men of this generation that Freemasonry has something worthwhile to offer, something pertinent to the needs of the present day, something which will enrich their lives and contribute to their happiness.

We must always be ready, in a discreet and proper manner, to say a good word for our Fraternity, and to testify as to its part in our own lives. We must not make the mistake of hiding our light under a bushel.

Commenting on the Masonic meaning of the word “Charity,” W.: Bro.

Verringia in 1968 offered these cogent remarks:

To most people, the word “Charity” means the accepted term of helping the poor, or alms giving. I like to feel that Masonic Charity is something greater and nobler. It is Charity in the highest sense – the Charity or Love that comes from the heart.

In a discussion on the subject of words and actions, as they relate to

Masonic responsibility and the preservation of our Freedom, W.: Bro.

Amodeo in 2000 offered these instructive comments:

Freedom is a precious stone that is part of the foundation of a Master Mason. Freedom to think, to express one’s thoughts and freedom to choose. Sometime freedom is taken for granted. As Masons we must never do this. Freedom is like the innocent child and like that innocent child it needs to be nurtured and protected. In order to do this the Mason must place the stone of freedom upon the stone of responsibility.

The center point of the compass is where the Mason’s responsibility resides, to himself, to his family, to society, to the nation, to the world

and to his God. The outer point is where his freedom resides and its limit. Without freedom there is no responsibility. Without both of these one has no choices over his thoughts and actions.

In closing, my brothers, a Mason's actions, and his deeds, do define the nature of his reason, his word.

In 2001, W.: Bro. Amodeo, in a discourse on how Freemasons should respond to the September 11th attack, offered this perspicuous advice:

We as Freemasons must stand as a beacon of light with two goals before us. First, we must stand together with the principles of FREEMASONRY in hand to lead those who would be frightened and led astray by those that would use acts of violence to shed fear amongst the people that see FREEDOM as RESPONSIBILITY. Second, we must scorn and debase those who would attempt to bring us to their level where hatred fueled by vindictiveness reign.

.... The measure of a true man is not in what he can destroy ... but what he can build.

Thus, over the years Arcana Lodge has accumulated a wealth of knowledge that provides valuable insights into the nature of Freemasonry and human behavior. This knowledge has given the Lodge its direction and sense of purpose. As a result, for one hundred fifty years Arcana Lodge has remained a viable entity, where worthy men can meet on the level in accordance with the sublime and well-tested Masonic principles derived from the Holy Bible. Ultimately it is faith in that Higher Authority which has guided Arcana Lodge in the performance of its noble work – to build better men.

As we move forward into a new chapter in the history of Arcana, let us move forward with the vision of our forefathers: To create a place where all men, of good character, with an earnest desire to moderate their passions, who recognize the difference between right and wrong with regard to one's own behavior, can meet in fellowship and develop the skills necessary to live happy, healthy and prosperous lives.

*W.: Victor Amodeo
January 2002*

Without fear of contradiction I say "There is no greater Lodge in all the sphere of Masonry than Arcana, nor are there more loyal and understanding Brethren on the face of the earth."

*W.: Sam Weiss
March 1, 1955*

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