

Chandler Lodge #138 F &AM  
Lodge Education Program

Subject: Rosslyn Chapel

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Most masons have heard of the Rosslyn Chapel made popular the last few years by the DaVinci Code Movie. This building has been connected to the Knights Templar and solomons temple, bringing any interested speculative masons to contemplate any possible connection to modern freemasonry. Before we can discuss the building itself, we must review the person with the desire and plans for this significant undertaking. William Sinclair was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Orkney, and baron of the Roslyn Glen area in Midlothian, Scotland. The St Clair family has many historic ties to freemasonry. To begin with the name; Sinclair is derived from latin, and literally translates to “holy light”. The family is one of the Merovingian dynasties. The Merovingian lineage is the royal bloodline from the Normandy region of France. In recent years this blood line has been researched as a possible blood line to Jesus Christ. According to this theory, Jesus Christ did not die; was hidden and eventually married and had children with Mary Magdalene. This theory is not popular with Christians due to the fact it seems Jesus was a mortal man, however there is much later evidence to link history with speculation. The theory is that when the Romans destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem in 70 A.D. that Mary and her daughter Sara found refuge in a Jewish community in what later became France. Sarah’s offspring are said to have married into royal families, and descendants spread across Europe. The merovingian birthmark was directly above the heart, in the form of a small red cross. Through ancient genealogies 5 generations of leaders of the Roman Empire up to the crusades can be traced through this bloodline. The Crusades are when we see the emergence of the Knights Templar, as European Christians return to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim control. The adopted symbol of these Knights of the Temple of Solomon was the small red cross worn on a white tunic over the heart. Legend has it that Hughes de payen the first Grand Master of the Templar’s was married to Catherine St Clair and they visited the Roslyn area in 1120. The later generations of this bloodline were one of the five families that fought with Robert the Bruce for Scotland’s independence from England, this story was made popular in the movie ‘brave heart’. The Masonic connection starts here as the Sinclair family claims that King James II, King of Scotland appointed William St Clair the hereditary Grand Master of Scottish masons. It is known that upon his death the family continued to hold annual meetings at Kilwinning, some 300 years before the grand lodge of England was formed. This should be enough background to see that William Sinclair could have been a very prominent individual being from the French area with ties to the bloodline of Christ, and the Scottish masons. This is a very strong part of the connection the Sinclair family has to the knights Templar and Roslyn Chapel.

The official given name of this 15<sup>th</sup> century building is the Collegiate Church of St. Matthew. It was founded in a small glen area known as Roslin, Midlothian, Scotland. The building was the design and desires of the previously discussed William Sinclair. The foundation stone was laid on September 21<sup>st</sup> 1446 with construction lasting 40 years. The building is oriented directly East to West, the altar in the east. Although no original building plans have been discovered it is said that the building is laid out as a small-scale replica of Solomon’s Temple, it is known that the construction was rushed to meet the consecration ceremony held on the autumn equinox of September 21<sup>st</sup> 1450. Before William Sinclair died he brought masons and workmen from France, Portugal, Italy, Spain and all over Europe to complete this project. With his royal connections he stated that there was no proper lodge and that the Masons shall have and build the town of Roslyn, and house and lands and be rewarded according to their degree with the master Mason receiving 40 (lbs) yearly.

The building is constructed entirely of two types of stone, one hard for structural integrity and the other softer for carving. The chapel measures almost 41 ft tall, 35 foot wide and 68 ft long. It stands on 14 pillars and form 12 pointed arches; the most famous pillars at the east end are the Master, Journeyman,

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and apprentice. The famous apprentice pillar gets its name from an legend that states while the master mason was away in Rome to review a sample of the column to be built, the apprentice not knowing what was to be on the pillar carved his own creation in an attempt to please the master and keep the building on schedule. Upon his return the master flew into a rage at the out of place elaborately carved pillar and killed the apprentice with a blow to the head with a mallet. These pillars adjacent on each side to the altar are also said to represent the Masonic Jachin and Boaz. Another Masonic connection is that the figure carved on the column had a beard, and was later roughly removed with another tool, as masters of the time were the only ones allowed to wear a beard, thus making him the 'murdered master'. The chapel has been abandoned and reopened on several occasions, the last being 1861. Each time additions, and repairs have been added or started. The latest being in 1997 a large freestanding steel roof was erected. This is allowing the proper restoration of the roof, and allowing moisture to dry from the exposed areas of the stone. Through previous excavations and x-ray of the land it is known that the crypt of the Sinclair family is still intact and accessible through a stairway at the rear of the chapel, these x-rays also found the foundations stone laid in the form of a crucifix and prove that the chapel was not completed to the original design. Legend states that Roslyn may be the hiding place of the Holy Grail found by the Knights Templar as they excavated and suddenly evacuated the temple of Solomon with great wealth. Other theories abound that the head of Christ is hidden there, or possibly the tomb of Mary Magdalene. The famous pillars are said to hollow just like Jachin and Boaz, and contain the secrets of the Templars, still another legend of the St. Clair family is that there are six large chambers filled with pure white sand from the temple mount, and contain six large chests of vast royal treasure. The ground surveys mentioned above, do prove that six large chambers do in fact exist but all excavations of the lands have been ceased due to the fragile nature of the chapel structure. In addition the chapel is filled with thousands of carvings, most stones contain a 'masons mark' on the stone even though this was not a common practice in Europe, but was the practice around the holy land. The carvings tell stories of the bible, and the St Clair family, there are many floral patterns from plants not common to Scotland, including corn which would not be seen until Columbus sailed to the new world 100 years later. Another prominent carving is the flour-de-lis (lilly), which is a symbol of the Royal house of France, and also represents the Virgin Mary.

The Roslyn chapel is a great symbol of operative masonry, one of the most preserved and delicate example of our ancient operative brethren. The history and theories surrounding this structure are beyond comprehension. Built in 1440, three hundred years before masonry was organized one man created a symbol that may or may not be a link, the missing link to freemasons connection to the actual knights Templar of Solomon. The modern speculative mason, professional historians and scientist still can't decipher all that was left for us. If history ever does indeed prove this connection it will also have the life altering fact that masonry does connect to Solomon and Christ himself, thus proving we are from 'time immemorial'

In closing I will leave you with an inscription found inside Roslyn Chapel. You may recognize it, but the question is did masons put it there, or did they get it from there? "Wine is strong, a King is stronger, and women stronger still – but truth conquers all"

Source: Everything Freemasons Book  
Rosslyn Chapel Official Website  
Crystal links – Rosslyn Chapel  
Wikipedia