

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
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**RESEARCH TECHNIQUES OF THE HISTORIAN
AS APPLIED TO THE HISTORY OF THE VICTORIA MASONIC TEMPLE**

by

Bro. Roland R. Spence, Camosun Lodge No. 60, April 16, 1974

I. What is history?

There are a number of definitions. For the purpose of this address: History is an attempt to recreate through pictures and/or words, that which has happened before. It is an approach to the past.

II. History may be viewed as four-phase phenomenon:

1. deciding what to record (it was a cloudy day).
2. placing what you have decided to record in the context of what has happened before and after
(it was a cloudy day when the troops evacuated the beach).
3. interpretation of 2 by the reader (because it was a cloudy day when the troops were being evacuated from the beach, many soldiers were saved by the protective covering).
4. retelling of the history by the reader.

III. What is the best approach to the study of the past?

1. The Subjective Approach or historical relativism. This approach accepts the premise that "Man is at the same time both subject and object of historical knowledge...." (Raymond Aron-Professor of Sociology at the Sorbonne). The subjective historian accepts time and place-and either states strongly his points of view of what he is writing, or attempts to use opinion moderately. Aron also noted: "One can comprehend different perspectives even when they seem contradictory and see in their multiplicity a sign not of defeat but of richness of life." An example of historical relativism is the first sentence from the book, *The Unjust Society*, written by red-power advocate Harold Cardinal:

"The history of Canada's Indians is a shameful chronicle of the white man's disinterest, his deliberate trampling of Indian rights and his repeated betrayal of our trust."

There are two ways of reading relativist history:

- (a) Read it and attempt to figure out what really happened (The Watergate hearings have given people ample practise at this.)
- (b) Read it, accept it as opinion, and perhaps look for something with an opposing or neutralist point of view.

The real danger of this approach to history is when the historian writes subjectively without analyzing or understanding his points of view.

2. The Objective Approach. Influenced by the scientific method, it is an attempt to present a neutral point of view. One major problem facing this method, is that much of what has been recorded has not been done objectively. Also, is it possible for anyone to be truly objective? (Actually, the historian ceases to be objective when he records something to the exclusion of everything else.) In addition, why is objectivity important when the reader will interpret

the history in different ways in any case? The highly-regarded historian, Charles Beard wrote that there are no "'raw facts' lying around the world awaiting

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collection by the historian" and there is something absurd about "the idea that facts duly assembled, in a library or laboratory, automatically and inexorably suggest or dictate their own conclusions in all." This approach denies the time and place factor. It is often boring if continued throughout a lengthy text.

An example of objective history is the small section of "Masons" found in Encyclopedia Canadiana: a: "Freemasonry commenced in what is now Canada before 1789 when a lodge was instituted, under a Boston warrant, at Annapolis Royal. It began to assume organized form in Quebec in 1759 upon the establishment of lodges in British forces. The Provincial Grand Lodge of Upper Canada was established in 1792. There is now a Grand Lodge in each province, with numerous local lodges, but a supreme or central lodge for all Canada has not developed."

3 An example of Objective-Subjective Approach While historians do not spend much time debating this form, it is the most prevalent. It is an attempt to be objective with some supposition.

An example of subjective-objective history is the first paragraph from the chapter, "The Road to War 1933-1939" from Europe since 1815 by Gordon A. Craig:

"Distracted by the rigors of the depression and the internal political problems caused by it, the democratic nations reacted slowly and with little urgency to the beginning of a new era of aggression by the totalitarian states. Their leaders were facile in inventing excuses both for the lawless acts committed and for their own disinclination to do anything about them, and they were supported for years by their peoples, who wanted to be assured that foreign affairs would not add to their troubles.

The first example of this blindness to reality came in 1931-1932, when the Japanese government, under the influence of its military leaders, created an incident in Manchuria and used it to begin the systematic conquest of that Chinese province, actually placing a puppet ruler on its throne in February 1932."

The above tract includes value judgments, but the historian has attempted , to remain objective in his is reporting of what has happened.

IV. What approach would this speaker like to see used on a history of Victoria's Masonic Temple?

As I would like the history to be both interesting and informative, I would choose approach 3 above. Also by using this method, it would be possible to utilize both primary and secondary sources extensively. (A primary source is the initial document or recording. A secondary source is one utilizing primary sources, and being more or less second hand. For example, documents and recollections of the Temple would primary sources, and such an article as W. G. Gamble's "History of Early Days of Freemasonry in B.C." is a secondary source.

Material Available in the B. C. Provincial Archives.

Newspapers. The first article on masonry by a Victoria newspaper was "The Members of the Ancient Order of F. & A. Masons," Gazette, July 10, 1858, p. 3. There are 1¼ inches of file cards of newspaper articles on masonry, some cards having as many as 6

entries.

Records (originals) 1852 - 1969. There are 7 inches of file cards relating to Grand Lodge records, correspondence, financial records, applications for initiation, Masonic Association records, records of individual Lodges. Scottish Rite records 1867 - 1945. Most of these were deposited in the Archives, 1869-72 for the Grand Lodge of B.C. by Victoria Columbia Lodge No.1 and Vancouver and Quadra Lodge No.2.
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Printed books and pamphlets~ There are 3 inches of file cards. Some examples are:

W.E. Ireland, A Further Note on the Annexation Petition of 1869--B.C. Historical Quarterly.

T.M. Reed, Pioneer Masonry--A History of Early Days of Free Masonry on the Pacific Coast.

B.H.E. Gould, This Mine House: Vancouver Island Craft (1858-1871) Report of Provincial Grand Lodge, 1867.

VI A Brief History of the Masonic Temple.

The first lodge to meet in Victoria was Victoria Lodge No. 1085 E.C., which first congregated in August 1860. It met over a stationery shop on the south-west corner of Langley and Yates Streets. When that building was out-grown, masonry moved to East Government where View Street was later to push through. After the city acquired this property, the brethren decided to purchase the property on Douglas Street between Herald and Fisgard Streets. Mr. Teague was the architect, and in August 1878, Victoria-Columbia Lodge No. 1 met there. It had cost \$12,000 including furnishings. No reference to the new building was made in the lodge minutes. The anteroom was in the east end of the building and the building went only as far back as the present lodge room. Entrance to the upper floor was by circular stairs climbing the south-east corner of the building. References to the 1878 building were made in "The Colonist"--- " one of the finest and most imposing structures recently erected."

"an ornament to the city and a credit to the Masonic Order."

Of the interior--"At the head of the grand staircase there is a beautiful stained glass window, bearing several exquisitely wrought emblems of the Order"

Of the lodge room-"This room is one of, if not the finest in the city."

In 1908, Victoria's masonry sold its property on Herald Street, and the \$12,000 realized paid for an addition on the back of the building.

VII How would this speaker approach a history of Victoria's Masonic Temple?

Basic Themes--

The Temple and Masonry have grown with the city.

Masonry is people as well as an institution.

Method--

Break down research into small tasks.

After studying newspapers, documents, books, pamphlets, etc. and talking to senior masons, record information and compile lists of dates and names.

Using dates and names utilize diaries and information found in other sources on prominent masons.

Synthesize collected materials and note various significant points of the history of masonry in Victoria. (I believe it would be wise to stay away from

developing information on individual lodges.)
Sort material into chapters.
Rough draft-check accuracy of materials.
Write and rewrite and rewrite.
Publish.