

Victoria Lodge of Education and Research

650 Fisgard St, Victoria, B.C. Canada

THE ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY AT GRAND LODGE

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Purpose

The Library and Archives serves two main purposes. In a stewardship role it is responsible for preserving our history. But it also fills an educational role; making the contents readily available to our members, and to the public.

Library

Containing over 7,200 items, plus the Francis J. Burd Collection (Grand Master 1911-12) of some 1000 books, our library is perhaps the largest and most comprehensive Masonic library in Canada. While the libraries of the United Grand Lodge of England, the House of the Temple in Washington, DC, and several Grand Lodge libraries in the USA are beyond compare, our library is nonetheless noteworthy.

As an example of the quality of books, and depth of material, it should be noted that we own two copies of the original 1723 edition of Anderson's Constitutions, several subsequent editions of the eighteenth century edition, a very rare complete bound set of John Yarker's Kneph, original editions of a number of Leo Taxil's anti-Masonic books and several hundred eighteenth and nineteenth century texts and publications. Our oldest holding is an Italian book on architecture published in 1704.

Early History

The necessity for a Grand Lodge Library was first mentioned in an address by Grand Master Israel Wood Powell to Grand Lodge in 1875. A committee was appointed and \$71.50 approved to be spent on a bookcase. The library was composed of little more than proceedings and journals.

It was not until 1892 that a further \$100 was approved for binding of proceedings and the absence of a librarian was noted. By 1899 the library contained some 600 bound volumes, mostly copies of foreign proceedings.

Four hundred were in two bookcases with glass doors; others were on rough shelves. There were an additional 1,200 copies of paper-covered proceedings; uncared for and uncatalogued. The Grand Master reported that year that he was unable to determine if any outlay had been made for preservation or binding since 1895. Several subscriptions to journals had been allowed to lapse and a quantity of journals remained unopened. Although a recommendation was made that a few standard works and perhaps some subscriptions be budgeted for, nothing was done.

In 1900 a recommendation was approved to purchase a small reference library for the Grand Masters and that an annual sum be set aside for binding for a total of \$100. M. W. Bro. David Wilson and W. Bro. W. A. DeWolf-Smith were appointed as a committee to obtain reference books. It was decided that the library should remain in Victoria. Again in 1902 the Grand Master addressed the woeful condition of the library and recommended that the Grand Historian, DeWolf-Smith, take charge. In 1903 he moved the library, now including the *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* and several of Albert Mackey's books, to Vancouver. This was also the first time the contents had been sorted, arranged and classified in a card index and cabinet.

In 1903 the library budget was set at \$300 and from 1907 to 1910, it was \$400. V. W. Bro. W.A. DeWolf-Smith was appointed as Grand Librarian, an office he held from 1902 to 1925. DeWolf-Smith also held the office of Grand Historian from 1901 to 1912 and that of Grand Secretary from 1911 to 1937. He was given the rank of Past Grand Master in 1932.

It was not until 1930 that a Library Board was established under the chairmanship of Bro. F. J. Bayfield of Western Gate Lodge No. 48. His intention was to establish a circulating library and create a research lodge.

Recent History

The library contents have been moved several times in recent history: once when we moved our Grand Lodge offices to West Eighth Avenue in 1974, again from room 111 to its present location in room 110 and one more time in 1995 when a modified Boyden Catalogue System was adopted, the books sorted into categories and a catalogue database created. This database is available on two terminals in the library and a textfile of the database is available online on the Grand Lodge website, <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/library.html>. It currently contains over 8,200 items.

Classification system

The Boyden System, similar to the Dewey Decimal System, was created by Bro. William L. Boyden, librarian for the Supreme Council A.&A.S.R., S.J. It was made available to Masonic librarians in 1915 and was copyrighted in 1946 by the Supreme Council A.&A.S.R., S.J.. Our version has been modified for a Craft library:

M00 General works

M10 History and Philosophy: General Works

M20 Customs and Paraphernalia: General Works

M30 Jurisprudence: General Works

M40 Charity and Education: General Works

M50 Art and Architecture: General Works

M60 Literature and Music: General Works

M70 Societies admitting only Masons: General Works

M80 Woman in Masonry: General Works

M90 Prince Hall Freemasonry (Subdivided)

Grand Lodge website

Although our website was not intended as a topic for discussion in this paper, mention must be made of how the library is using the internet. Much of the contents of our website have been gleaned from the library, both text files and images. Specifically, we have received permission from the editor of *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* to reproduce their papers on our website, and the Proceedings from Vancouver Grand Masonic Days are being added. Adding online access to our library and archives databases is also under consideration.

Archives and Museum

Over the last eight years we have been engaged in an ongoing program of sorting and cataloguing. All objects not on display are now stored in a secured system of indexed, tiered uniform-sized boxes. Items on display of special interest are four aprons dating from the late 17th to mid 18th century and a collection of over 116 Past Master jewels. Our goal is to eventually display a jewel from each of the 194 lodges of this jurisdiction. Lodges that do not have a jewel on display are requested to consider either donating or lending one for this display.

Also on display are a number of items from overseas, including a Past Master's jewel from an Antient English lodge, predating 1813. Our first Grand Master's regalia, originally worn by M. W. Bro. Israel Wood Powell of Vancouver Lodge when serving as Provincial Grand Master for the Grand Lodge of Scotland, is displayed with a number of Grand Master's aprons. Also dating from this period is an interesting collection of lodge officer's collar jewels, including ones for the combined office of Secretary/Treasurer and a Senior Deacon's trowel and Junior Deacon's maul. British Columbia's first premier, John Foster McCreight of Victoria Lodge, was also a Freemason, and we have his Past Master's jewel on display. We also have a number of trowels used in cornerstone layings and a collection of gavels used by Grand Masters. Still in working order is a foot-powered pump organ, the first to arrive in Moodyville in 1865.

Unfortunately provenance was not a major concern when much of our collection was assembled and many of the jewels, medals and coins from other jurisdiction are unidentified. Discovering the source and perhaps something about the donors of these items is yet another ongoing project.

For the future

Remembering our twin purposes of stewardship and education, your Library and Archive Board of Trustees has developed a program of projects for the coming years.

Mount Elphinstone Lodge No. 130 has kindly granted full reproduction rights to two books written by the late R. W. Bro. J. Morton Heaps, *Canadian Work Explained* and *American Work Explained*. These books are being transcribed and will be made available as textfiles on our website and reprinted when our budget allows. A version may also be provided on CD.

Our Community Relations Committee produced a Masonic Information Handbook in 1995. Now in its fourth edition, another printing is planned.

John T. Marshall's *The History of Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1871 - 1970* is currently being transcribed as well as Robie Reid's *Historical Notes and Biographical Sketches*. Once this project is completed we intend to format the text, rescan the photographs and prepare a CD version complete with index and additional images.

The database of our archives catalogue nears completion and a published version of this is under consideration. We are also considering creating an online access to both this database and the library database.

In conclusion

Both the library and museum are open on the second and fourth Fridays of the month, from 5:00 pm until 10:00 pm, July and August excepted. Brethren are welcome to visit at these times, or contact the Grand Secretary's Office, (telephone 604-736-8941) to arrange visits during regular business hours. Evening group tours can also be arranged by contacting the Library and Archives Curator at <curator@freemasonry.bcy.ca>.

Suggested Reading

Freemasonry, A Journey through Ritual and Symbol, W. Kirk MacNulty. New York : Thames and Hudson Inc., 1999.

Freemasonry, The Study of a Phenomenon, Alexander Piatigorsky. London : The Harvill Press, 1997.

The Freemason at Work, Harry Carr. UK : Allan Lewis Masonic Ltd., n.d..

The Freemasons, Jasper Ridley. London : Constable & Robinson Ltd, 1999.

The Origins of Freemasonry : Scotland's Century, 1590-1710, David Stevenson. London Cambridge University Press:1990.