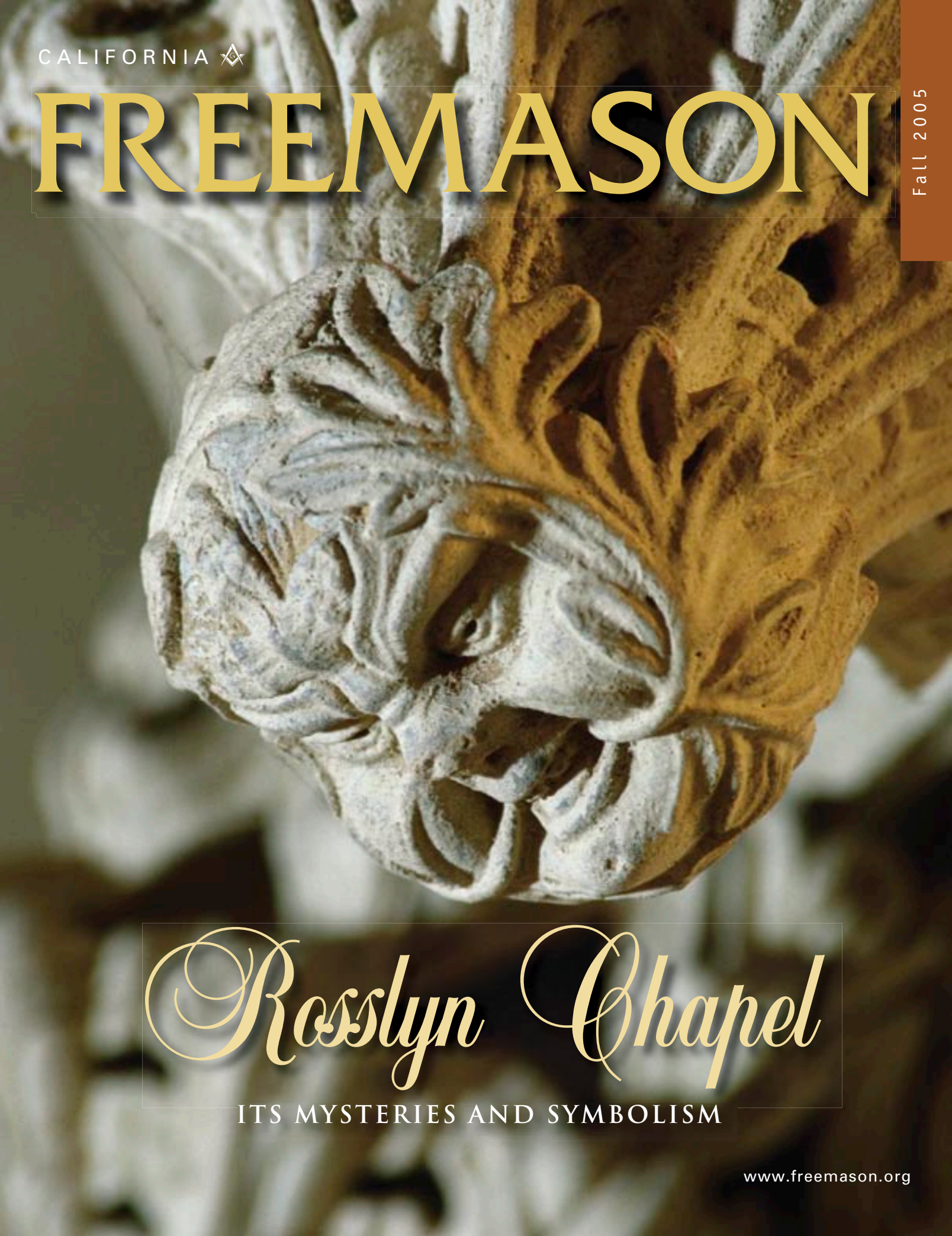

CALIFORNIA

FREEMASON

Fall 2005

Rosslyn Chapel

ITS MYSTERIES AND SYMBOLISM

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10 cover story

Symbols are not used as much today as they have in the past and can be puzzling to many people. In this issue dedicated to Freemasonry and the Victorian Era, Robert Cooper takes you inside the Rosslyn Chapel to explore its mysteries and symbolism. The article is based on Cooper's presentation at the Fifth Annual California Masonic Symposium in August. He is past master of Lodge Edinburgh Castle No. 1764 and curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland Museum and Library. Cooper has done immense research into the Rosslyn Chapel and the meanings behind its symbols and rich history.

For more articles of interest, check out California Freemason Online at www.freemason.org.

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Past Grand Master Warren J. Blomseth has been selected as the 2005 Mason of the Year. Learn more about this prestigious award.

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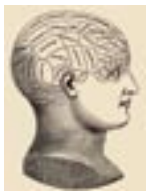
Expand your understanding of the rich history of Freemasonry with two recent books that aim to set the record straight.



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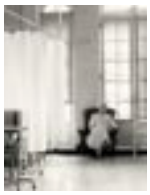

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UPCOMMING ANNUAL COMMUNICATION DATES

2006 October 9, 10,11
2007 September 28, 29, 30
2008 September 26, 27, 28

"In order to share some of the presentations made at the 5th Annual Masonic Symposium held at Stanford University on August 27, 2005, this edition of the California Freemason has been mailed on a date later than usually scheduled. The roster of officers above includes the names of those in office at the time of publication on September 21, 2005."

MASONRY IN CALIFORNIA

began during the Victorian era

Amongst all of the articles in this issue by experts on the Victorian era in Europe (1834–1901), it seems appropriate to reflect on the birth of California and the activities of Freemasonry in our state during this period.

On September 9, 1850, California was admitted as a state, with its first capital in San Jose, four months after the first Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of California was opened at the Masonic Hall in Sacramento.

During the last days of the cholera epidemic, California Masonry—with fewer than 300 members—held a Semi-Annual Communication on November 26, 1850, in Sacramento with six chartered lodges and five under dispensation (including one in Portland, Ore.). That same month, the brethren belonging to the three lodges in Sacramento (Tehama Lodge No. 3, Jennings Lodge No. 4, and Sutter Lodge No. 6) exemplified the ideals of true Masonic charity by disbursing $31,436 for the support of the Masonic and Odd Fellows Relief Hospital at Sutter's Fort, where the plague-smitten brethren were nursed back to health.

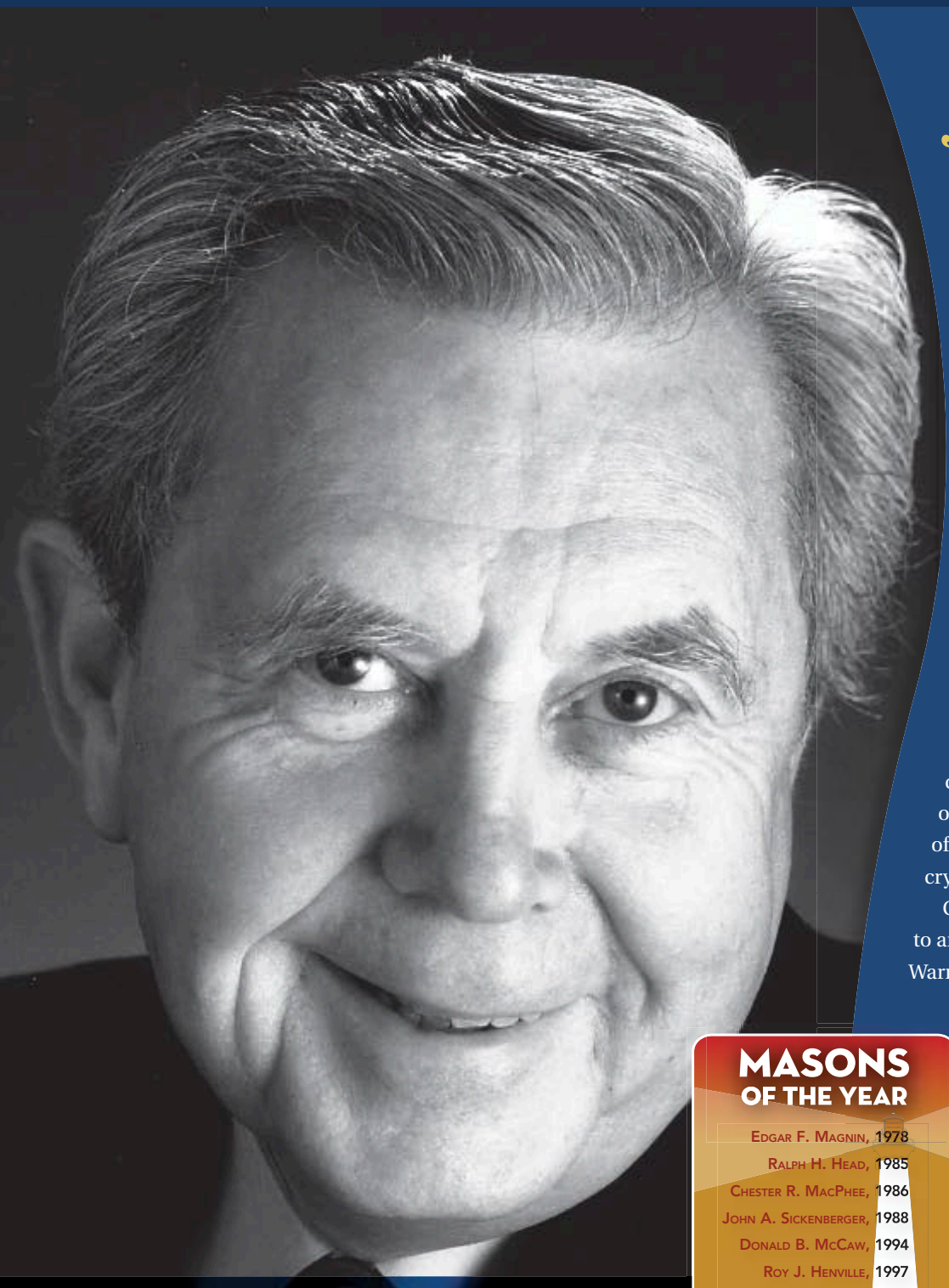
The advent of Masonry in California dovetails with several other important developments in the state. The 1850s saw a rise in Native American raids on mining towns because they had lost their traditional food sources, the introduction of Levi Strauss heavy trousers, and the completion of the first Buddhist Temple in the United States, and, of course, the introduction of Ghirardelli chocolates.

Within Masonry, the situation in California reached crisis level as the Grand Lodge sought to establish a single identity. The California grand lecturers were experiencing problems with the ritual, as every Master Mason and past master came from another Grand Lodge jurisdiction, each claiming to have the only true and perfect work. In 1853, the grand lecturer instructed on the "Buckeye Lectures" from Ohio, but his instructions were promptly ignored once he left the lodge room. To correct this problem, the Grand Lodge voted to require a certificate of proficiency in the new California work. As a result, most of the old past masters found themselves relegated to the "retired list."

The first attempt to split California into two states was passed by the California State Legislature in 1859, but Congress never considered the issue due to the outbreak of the Civil War. Although in 1860 California was a "free state," Abraham Lincoln carried California by only 734 ballots.

Following the Confederate attack at Fort Sumter, S.C., in April 1861, several units of Confederate volunteers were formed in the state, primarily in Sonoma, Los Angeles, and San Diego Counties. These units crossed into the Confederate territory of Arizona to join with Texas regiments. At about the same time, Lassen Lodge No. 149 in Susanville was granted a dispensation (March 21, 1861) with eight members and fees set for the first degree of $20.00 and $30.00 for the second degree.

Melvin B. Stein
Senior Grand Warden



A SHINING BEACON OF LIGHT

By Richard J. Berman

Warren J. Blomseth Named Mason of the Year

MASONS OF THE YEAR

- Edgar F. Magnin, 1978
- Ralph H. Head, 1985
- Chester R. MacPhee, 1986
- John A. Sickenberger, 1988
- Donald B. McCaw, 1994
- Roy J. Henville, 1997
- Michael Reynolds, 1998
- Warren J. Blomseth, 2005

Many organizations give out "person of the year" awards to recognize individuals who have distinguished themselves in their fields during the previous 12 months. While these accolades are no doubt well deserved, oftentimes it seems that certain winners are more impressive than others, and that there are "off years" in which honorees are selected simply because it was necessary to select one.

The Mason of the Year Award, in contrast, is given only when a member of the craft demonstrates truly exceptional behavior. In fact, this year marks only the eighth time in nearly 30 years that it has been presented. Recipients are selected at the discretion of the Grand Master only when the outstanding service of an individual Mason seems to cry out for special recognition.

Grand Master David R. Doan is proud to announce that Past Grand Master Warren J. Blomseth has been named as the 2005 Mason of the Year in California. Blomseth served as Grand Master in 1994, and is currently serving his third term as Grand Treasurer. He also served on the Nob Hill Masonic Management Board for six years, including five as president.

Brother Blomseth was raised on April 23, 1952, in Dimond Lodge No. 603 in Hayward, which was his father's lodge, and served as master in 1962. Among other duties, he served as Senior Grand Deacon in 1964, and Grand Orator in 1966. Blomseth is a 33° member in the San Francisco Bodies of the Scottish Rite, a York Rite Mason, and a member of Aahmes Temple of the Shrine.

Free

By Thomas D. Worrel

Whether we care to admit it or not, there is a definite relationship between Freemasonry and so-called "esoteric" organizations. The relationship between the two is so intertwined that sometimes it is hard to distinguish them.

To make the distinction, it is essential to focus upon parallels between our own time and the Freemasonry of the Victorian era, when many esoteric societies were founded. Some elements to consider include the general social environment of that time, the general state of Freemasonry, and the effect of emerging scientific discoveries of society at large.

What were some of the social issues arising in the era? One of the interesting and surprising movements may have actually received support from Isaac Newton. In his "Principia" of 1687, he wrote of: "... a subtle spirit or fluid

Sir Isaac Newton

MASONRY and the Esoteric Societies of Victorian England

... [that] permeated solid bodies, binding them together, lying at the root of electricity and heat, and facilitating all biological processes." This theory formed the basis for other theories such as mesmerism and phrenology. Both became very popular in the Victorian era, but one of the biggest movements was spiritualism. Spiritualism became popular in the 1850s, and thousands were swept up in the meetings, lectures, and classes given throughout England, and it is said that Queen Victoria herself attended séances and used the services of a medium to commune with the deceased Prince Albert.

The next question to consider regards the state of Freemasonry in that era. Elements from the Kabbalah had already shown up at least a hundred years earlier, but ample evidence exists to suggest that the Freemasonry of the Victorian period was probably no more esoteric than now. It is also important to note that several esoteric groups were formed during this time. Many were founded by Freemasons, and others had Freemasons within their ranks, including the Theosophical Society (1875), the Hermetic Society (1882), the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (1870), the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (1888), and the Order of the Sacred Word a.k.a. Aurum Solis (1897).

"Freemasonry of the Victorian period was probably no more esoteric than now"

This leaves us with a scenario in which the institution of Freemasonry was simply another of these esoteric societies. What distinguishes Freemasonry from the esoteric groups that sprang up around it in Victorian England?

While Freemasonry has elements that can be ascribed to mystical and esoteric traditions, it does not mean that Freemasonry is an esoteric society. The Freemasonry of Victorian England had unique intersections with esoteric groups, and many men were members of both types of societies. While there is no mystery to the purpose and aims of the esoteric societies, Freemasonry continues to appeal to men far beyond the narrow confines of such groups. And in its mysterious way, Freemasonry has continued to embrace men from all walks of life.

By John L. Cooper III, Grand Secretary

Freemasonry in the Victorian Era: An Overview

The forms and rituals of Freemasonry are very old, and we can discern the outline of our present degrees in materials that have been in use for at least the last three centuries. However, this often leads us to the erroneous conclusion that Freemasonry has remained unchanged over the years. And even more inaccurate is the notion that Freemasonry has held itself aloof from the societies in which it has existed. The fact is that Freemasonry as an institution has always been influenced by contemporary society, and the shape of the institution has been molded by the ideas and fashions of particular places and times.

In many ways, the Masonry of the Victorian Era (1837–1901) provides a perfect snapshot of how the craft has been shaped by the historical forces prevailing at a particular time in history—and at the same time how Masonry has had a profound effect on society at large.

Modern Freemasonry is in many respects the product of the Victorian Era. In those days not only was Freemasonry very influential in shaping society, but membership in a Masonic Lodge was part and parcel of being part of the intellectual and political elite. When Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, her cousin, the Duke of Sussex (son of George III), was Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England. Her son Edward was Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge until shortly before he was crowned as King Edward VII. Queen Victoria herself allowed the Grand Lodge to award her the title of Protectoress of Freemasonry.

In many ways, the Victorian era in Britain was the "golden age" of Masonry.

Most of the prominent decision makers in Queen Victoria's government were Freemasons, and the close relationship between the leaders in Victorian England and Freemasonry is a well-established fact.

Of course, the craft's close association with the royal family in Victorian England had its disadvantages, as well. The story of Jack the Ripper gripped Victorian-era London in no small part because of the various conspiracy theories that put the royal family and the Freemasons at the center of a savage and gruesome murder plot. Of course, the only reason that these rumors gained credence in the first place was because of the close association of Freemasonry with the royal family, which continues to this day. Victoria's son, as we have already learned, was Grand Master before becoming King, as was his grandson, King George VI. Queen Elizabeth's husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, is a Master Mason, and the current Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England, the Duke of Kent, is the Queen's cousin.

Another relic of Victorian-era Masonry is something that most Freemasons know very little about: the Red Cross of Constantine. There are several local chapters—called conclaves—of this organization in California, and they generally consist of the most active and prominent Masons in the state. The president of the California Masonic Foundation, Most Worshipful M. William Holsinger, is the head of the Los Angeles chapter of this organization, and Past Grand Master R. Stephen Doan is a former presiding officer of this organization, as are other Past Grand Masters. And our Grand Master himself is in the progressive line to become the Sovereign of St. Gabriel's Conclave a few years from now. The Red Cross of Constantine was born during the Victorian Era, and was an outgrowth of an interest in reviving some old traditions and rituals in Freemasonry in London in the 1860s. From this same source came the Masonic Rosicrucian Society, a still-extant organization which has attracted some of the most prominent leaders in Freemasonry. The creation of the Red Cross of Constantine and the Masonic Rosicrucian Society was the result of the work undertaken by Robert Wentworth Little in London in the 1860s.

In many ways, the Victorian era in Britain was the "golden age" of Masonry. Not only was it *de rigeur* for prominent members of society to be involved, but the importance of the craft was palpable throughout the highest levels of government and business. It is therefore hardly surprising that many of today's Masonic traditions trace their roots back to the standards and practices of that age. At the same time, today's Freemasons have built upon the proud traditions of earlier brothers to reflect the issues and realities that confront the world in the new millennium. Far from being a static organization, Masonry continues to be a dynamic vessel through which our common values can be shared with the world.

Conspiracy theories put Freemasonry in the center of the enduring mystery of Jack the Ripper.

THE MYSTERIES AND SYMBOLISM OF

Rosslyn Chapel

By Robert Cooper

Robert Cooper is past master of Lodge Edinburgh Castle No. 1764 and has served as Curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland Museum and Library for more than a decade. He is a world-renowned expert on Freemasonry in Scotland and has written extensively about the Knights Templar in Scotland and Rosslyn Chapel, a 15th-century landmark rich with Masonic symbolism that attracted widespread attention after the publication of Dan Brown's historical thriller "The Da Vinci Code" in 2003.

In an increasingly secular, materialistic, and empirical world, many people no longer have the ability to understand symbols. It is important to understand that symbols and signs are not interchangeable. A sign is designed for a specific purpose or to impart a particular piece of information such as "Road Work Ahead." It does not impart any other information, whereas a symbol is intended to do just that by transmitting abstract concepts as well as factual information. In this way, a symbol can also be a sign, but a sign cannot be a symbol. No sign could show "idea ahead" as if it referred to road construction. As people have become less religious (some would say less spiritual) whilst at the same time more literate, the need for symbols has declined. And once symbols fall into disuse, their meaning and purpose can be easily lost.

Hand in hand with this decline in the understanding and use of symbols has been a decline in knowledge regarding the people and institutions that made use of them, especially in religion, in buildings, books, artifacts, and in ritual. That loss of understanding means that symbolism generally is a puzzle to many, and Rosslyn Chapel is an example of that process. Because there is a lack of readily available information about the history and development of the chapel, some writers have reinterpreted its purpose, history, and symbolic meaning. Some have suggested that it is an unfinished Jewish Temple, a pagan place of worship, or a Masonic building. Before discussing the symbolism of Rosslyn Chapel, some brief details of its history may be useful.

The building of the chapel commenced in 1446, more than 100 years before the Scottish Reformation, during a period when the Roman church was supreme in all matters of religion. Rosslyn Chapel was initially built as a church by the St. Clair family, an ancient noble family. About the genealogy of the family, Father Richard Augustine Hay wrote in the late 17th century, "Therfor, to the end he [William St. Clair] might not seem altogither unthankfull to God for the benefices he receaved from him, it came to his minde to build a house for God's service ..." The purpose of the builder was therefore clear—to create a place of worship. By 1456, Rosslyn was described as a "College Kirk," i.e., a collegiate church. Such institutions were created "... to ensure salvation for the founder and his family by providing for prayers to be offered in perpetuity by a succession of Priests." In addition, Rosslyn Chapel was, from the outset, designed to be the burial place of the St. Clair family, with all bodies interred in vaults below the building. After the death of the builder, William St. Clair, Earl of Orkney in 1484, the chapel continued to be used for its original purpose until the last member of the family was buried in the vaults around 1778. In this sense, Rosslyn is not at all unusual in that collegiate churches were fairly common—there were a total of 45 in Scotland, and many were built and endowed by

Continued on page 12

families with the same kind of local social position and wealth as the St. Clairs.

Rosslyn Chapel was typical of a secular collegiate church of the time, and its style, decoration, meaning, and purpose were representative of the religious mores of the era. However, many recent publications claim that the chapel's carvings relate to the Knights Templar and have some mystical significance or are in some way Masonic. These suggestions appear to be based on ignorance of Christian art and symbolism, Scottish Masonic history and practice, and fanciful reinterpretations of the meaning of the chapel's carvings. At one time, everyone visiting the chapel would have immediately understood the meaning of the symbolism enshrined in stone. Because few people today fully understand this religious symbolism, this has allowed many incorrect explanations to be offered.

In addition, the understanding of the carvings has been hampered by ignorance of the sources from which the symbolism was originally taken. An example is the figure of a man with two horns holding a tablet in one hand and a rod in the other, which, it is claimed, depicts the devil tallying the number of souls he has ensnared. However, the Rev. John Thompson points out that the image is actually that of Moses with the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Since 1560, many Scots have used Protestant Bibles that do not refer to Moses with horns, and it is therefore understandable that the carving has been misinterpreted. However, when the chapel was being built, the Bible in use was the Latin Vulgate, which describes Moses as having horns. In light of this information, the intention of the carved figure becomes obvious. But because fewer people than ever before are familiar with the Bible—let alone the differences between the numerous versions—it is easy to understand how secular interpretations of the symbolism in Rosslyn Chapel have become popular.

A further complication arises with the interpretation of symbols such as the so-called "green men," stone carvings that appear not only in Rosslyn, but in countless other churches throughout Britain. By claiming that Rosslyn Chapel is not really a Christian edifice, some have argued that the green man is actually a non-Christian image and is proof that the building has pagan origins. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of church history and its use of symbols. The green man was certainly a pagan symbol with several meanings: the never-ending pattern of the seasons, together with pre-Christian concepts of reproduction,

By claiming that Rosslyn Chapel is not really a Christian edifice, some have argued that the green man is actually a non-Christian image and is proof that the building has pagan origins.

fertility, and the agricultural cycle. The origins of the green man do not, however, lie with Britain's pre-Christian forbears but rather in classical antiquity. To the Greeks and Romans it suggested the full flowering of education and was therefore an inspirational symbol. When the green man was incorporated into Christian iconography it was assigned different attributes, creating several layers of meaning related to Christianity. The pagan interpretation of the green man was modified by Christians to represent the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The symbol also demonstrated all of God's creation: animal (represented by the human face), vegetable (the foliage), and mineral (the stone from which the symbol was carved). There are several other Christian interpretations, but perhaps the most important is also simplest: The green man is Jesus Christ, who was sent by God from Heaven into the world, represented by the foliage. The symbol, therefore, shows that Heaven and Earth are linked through one person only—Jesus Christ.

Another problem in the interpretation of symbols in Rosslyn Chapel relates to the

retrospective application of symbolic meaning. An example of this is the suggestion that some of the carvings within the chapel are those of the Knights Templar. In particular, one carving of a lamb with a passion cross is often described as "The Templar seal of the Agnus Dei." Although the Knights Templar did make use of this symbol, it was adapted from an existing Christian image which had been used by the church for several centuries.

Finally, there is the problem of when an undisputable Christian symbol has had its meaning modified so that it is now claimed to be only partly Christian. An example of this type of reinterpretation concerns carvings of angels which have been described as being: "... in poses of ritual significance to Freemasons." The suggestion that a "Masonic Angel" exists is preposterous, but demonstrates where this process can lead. As one might expect, the alleged Masonic significance of such angelic postures is nowhere explained.

What, then, do these carvings at Rosslyn represent? Having confirmed that the chapel has always been a Christian edifice, it seems reasonable that it is to that religion that one should turn in order to find an explanation. There are numerous carvings of angels, and when one recalls that the collegiate church was originally dedicated to St. Matthew, the chapel's Christian credentials become even more obvious. The symbol of St. Matthew is that of a winged man—an angel. These carvings, therefore, have a dual symbolism of an angel and of St. Matthew. Some of the angels have only a generalized meaning, but some have scrolls on which a few meaningful words would have been inscribed. There are many other fine examples of this type of "messenger" in other Scottish ecclesiastic buildings, such as Melrose Abbey.

The original "Illustrated Guide to Rosslyn Chapel" was written by the Rev. John Thompson, chaplain to Francis Robert, 4th Earl of Rosslyn. He had an intimate knowledge of the St. Clair family and the chapel, and his book is an authoritative guide to the symbolism within the structure. His book brings clarity to the confusing debate regarding the purpose of the chapel, shows a clear understanding of the meaning of the chapel's multitude of Christian symbols, and provides a detailed guide to the building. From a historical point of view this book is interesting as much for what it does not tell us as for what it does. It serves, therefore, as a reference point in the timeline of material written about Rosslyn Chapel and allows us to assess subsequent commentary and opinion regarding this most interesting of buildings.

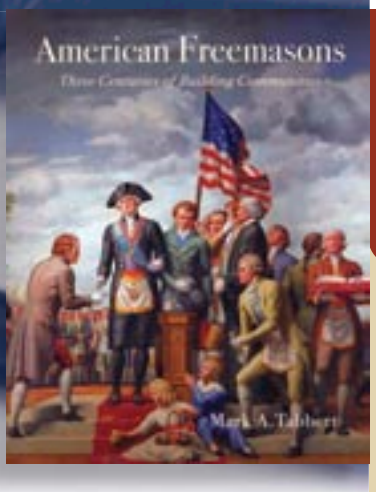
The Rev. Thompson describes not only Rosslyn Chapel but also the surrounding area—the landscape, the people, and the major buildings, and in so doing places the chapel in its historical, social, and physical context. Today the chapel is usually considered in isolation, which tends to lead to an overemphasis on the alleged differences with similar buildings. Thompson deals with the chapel and the surrounding area, giving a more holistic approach to the chapel, its history, and purpose. Thus, his description of Rosslyn Castle allows us to consider the relationship between the two. Both were, of course, built and owned by the St. Clairs of Rosslyn, and this arrangement of a small family castle together with a place of worship nearby conformed to a national pattern of defensive and religious architecture sponsored by powerful families.

Thompson describes in considerable detail the carvings within the chapel and, like Episcopal Bishop Robert Forbes, notes the profusion of carvings of plants and flowers and other foliage. Interestingly, neither describes any of these carvings as being that of Indian corn or of Aloe cactus. The significance of this is that this places this interpretation of carvings after Thompson's explanation. In other words, between the time building commenced in 1446 and modern times, no one claimed that these carvings represented plants from another continent. When one is aware that there are carvings of vegetation in most churches of the medieval period, one might wish to consider such interpretations with some circumspection. Similarly, the claim that there is a carving of the death mask of Robert I (1276–1329) in the retro-choir is of recent origin and was never suggested by either Forbes or Thompson.

Of course, these are only a few of the many examples of supposedly subversive—or even heretical—symbols that one can find in Rosslyn Chapel. The building played a prominent role in Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code," and as a result, many visitors now visit Rosslyn with the preconceived idea that it is filled with secret signs "proving" that it is somehow affiliated with so-called secret societies. And as a result of Brown's book, many people now believe that it is actually the final resting place of the Holy Grail! In this case, however, fiction appears to be stranger than truth, and the best way to truly understand the meaning of the carvings in the chapel is to develop an understanding of what its symbols really mean.

Book Reviews

American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities



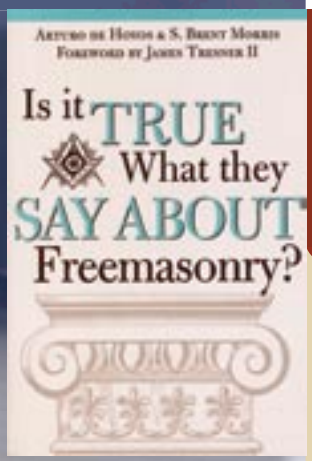
Mark A. Tabbert
New York University Press
ISBN: 0814782922
Copyright 2005
(Hardcover, 262 pages)

By Steven C. Bullock

The history of American Masonry spans almost three centuries and includes such diverse participants as George Washington, Walt Disney, and both Andrew Jackson and Jesse Jackson. Not surprisingly, the subject has inspired numerous specialized studies. Mark Tabbert's "American Freemasons" takes on the daunting task of surveying this broad field. In a crisp 200-page account that is both readable and reliable, Tabbert has produced what is now the best single introduction to the subject for Masons and non-Masons, scholars, and general readers alike.

"American Freemasons" divides its subject into three periods, ending in 1835, in 1920, and in 2000, respectively, with the last two segments organized as well around the fraternity's primary roles. Besides tracing Masonic associations from the Blue Lodge to the Royal Arch and the Rainbow Girls, the work also notes the fraternity's connection with such non-Masonic groups as the Rotary and the Knights of Columbus. The account deftly balances specific information and broader interpretation, while the extensive and well-chosen color illustrations add yet another dimension to this admirable work.

Is It True What They Say about Freemasonry?



Arturo de Hoyos & S. Brent Morris
M. Evans and Company, Inc.
ISBN: 1590770307
Copyright 2004
(Softcover, 262 pages)

For as long as there have been Freemasons, there has been a calculated effort to disparage and discredit them as well as their practices. But why does this incessant attack exist and where does it originate? "Is It True What They Say about Freemasonry?" is an insightful text in which Masons Arturo de Hoyos and S. Brent Morris explore the origins of the anti-Masonic mindset and delve into the falsehoods on which critics have based these perennial sentiments.

Confronting opponents one at a time, the authors methodically debunk the myths that have surrounded Freemasonry since its establishment, investigating the motives and misconceptions that drive these antagonists to spread deceit about Masonic traditions. With close readings and thorough research, they uncover a history of fallacies that has been handed down through the generations, and ultimately expose anti-Masonic prejudices that reach almost 300 years into the past.

Arturo de Hoyos, 33, is the grand archivist and grand historian of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, USA, and S. Brent Morris, 33, is director of membership development at the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, USA.

Widows Then and Now Are High-Risk Group

Lodge members provide invaluable assistance

By Ann Lyon Dudley

In 1913 the new hospital building at the Union City Masonic Home was completed. The hospital housed 12 occupants and was one of the most elaborately equipped hospitals on the Pacific Coast.

In the 19th century, members of an extended family tended to live in the same community, and it was common practice for them to look after one another.

This system of familial support was often the only guarantee that women had of being provided for after their husbands died—after all, it would be several decades before the advent of Social Security, and pension payments were often minimal. Widows of Civil War veterans received about $12 a month from the federal government.

Because the presumption was that the elderly would be cared for by their relatives, there were few private institutions that would take in seniors who could no longer care for themselves. As a result, elderly Americans often found themselves being shuttled between family members and without a permanent home.

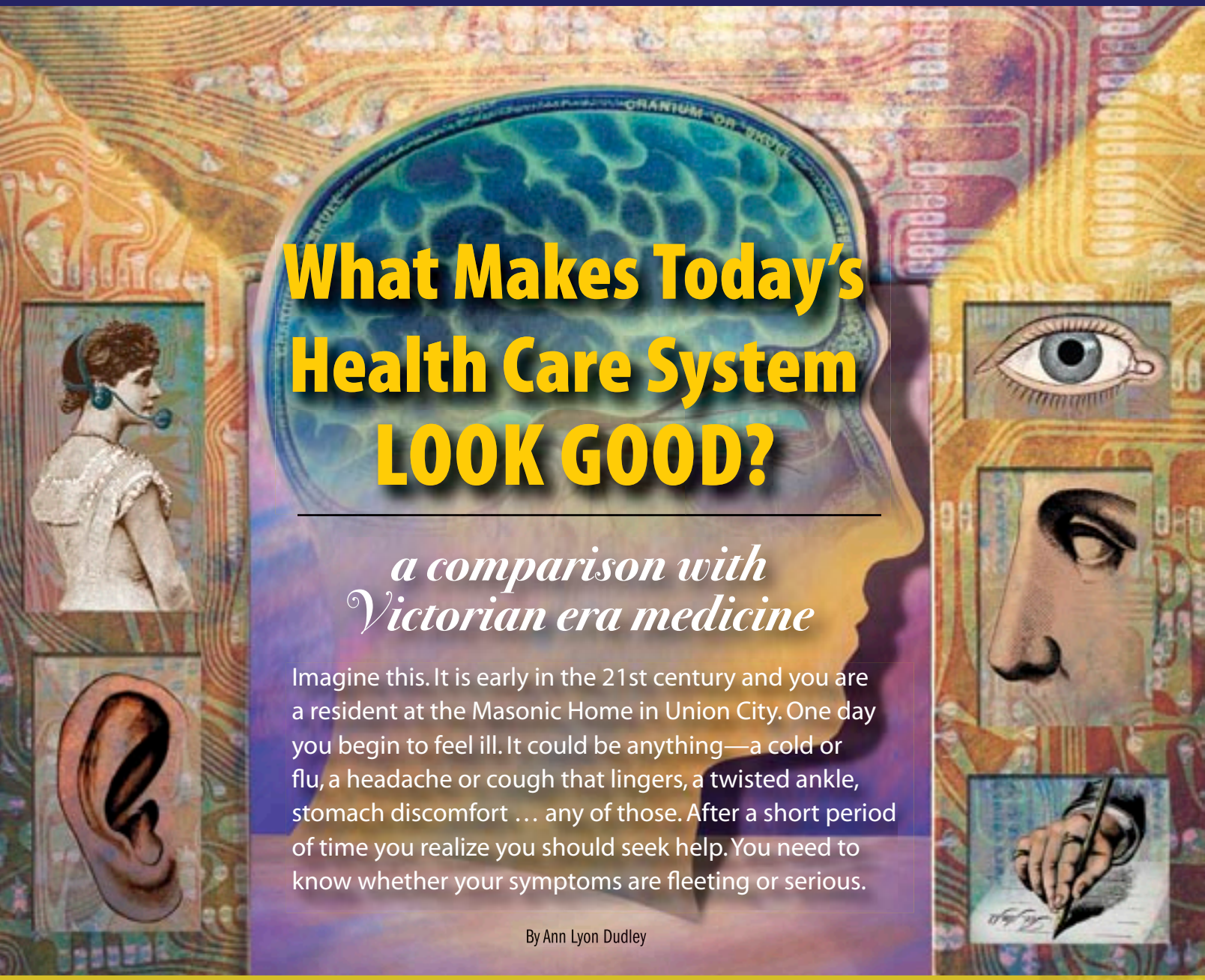
The Freemasons of California were truly pioneers in the field of elder care in the 19th century. In the written program that marked the laying of the cornerstone for the Widows' and Orphans' Home at Decoto (now Union City) in 1896, it was remarked that "For many years the hands of help extended to the unfortunate were unofficial." That statement underscored that without family willing to take them in, many widows had been in desperate straits. Masons who were early California pioneers recognized this; in fact, they identified the need to care for the state's widows and orphans with a Masonic Home as early as 1850, although the Union City facility did not take in its first residents until nearly 50 years later.

> Across the country, widows are identified as the most vulnerable segment of the senior population.

Today, the need to care for the widows of Master Masons is as acute as it was during the Gold Rush. Across the country, widows are identified as the most vulnerable segment of the senior population. They are three times more likely to live in poverty and isolation than their male counterparts, three out of four nursing facility residents are women, and women account for 75 percent of the elderly poor.

Today there are approximately 14,000 Masonic widows in California. Even though Social Security and private pensions provide a safety net, many lodge members step up and fill in the gaps for seniors, particularly widows, by providing a range of services regardless of people's ability to pay. These services include financial and care support through Masonic Outreach Services, residential services through the Masonic Homes, and mowing lawns and home visits by concerned lodge members.

Happily, some good things in life do not change. The care and compassion of the fraternity bears witness to that, as its commitment to the neediest among them is passed from generation to generation.



What Makes Today's Health Care System LOOK GOOD?

a comparison with Victorian era medicine

Imagine this. It is early in the 21st century and you are a resident at the Masonic Home in Union City. One day you begin to feel ill. It could be anything—a cold or flu, a headache or cough that lingers, a twisted ankle, stomach discomfort … any of those. After a short period of time you realize you should seek help. You need to know whether your symptoms are fleeting or serious.

By Ann Lyon Dudley

You go to the Health Center on campus (if it is during the day) or ring for help from your room if it is after hours. To a large degree, your fears are calmed by the knowledge that a trained nurse is nearby, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You will be assessed and treated (if necessary) by medical professionals—nurses and board-certified physicians—who are skilled and experienced. While understandably concerned about what it is that ails you, you are secure in the knowledge that qualified medical care is at hand and you will receive prompt, expert care. No one likes to fall ill and require medical attention. But there is comfort in knowing that help is at hand and the treatment options are considerable.

Medicine in the Victorian Era

Now, imagine this scenario. You live at home somewhere in California in the mid-1860s. It is 40 years before the Masonic Home in Union City will open its doors. Again, you fall ill and are not quite sure what it is that is wrong.

What would follow is starkly different from the scenario described above for treatment in the 21st century. Because now you live, not in an age of incredibly advanced technology and medical research, but in the Victorian era, a time described by one historian as "the middle ages of medicine."

At the start of the 19th century, while daily life had changed significantly from the previous century, medical practices remained virtually unchanged from those of the 18th century.

Medicine in California was still rather primitive. Many doctors were practicing without a license. Louis Pasteur's theory that bacteria caused infection was developed in the 1860s in France but was slow to be accepted in the United States. Life expectancy was less than 50 years.

There were no laws governing the practice of medicine or the selling of drugs and potions at this time. Many of the adventurers who had come to California to seek their fortunes in gold had been unsuccessful and remained in the state to make money with quack remedies for the sick. Anyone could advertise as a healer. A lot of people did.

Until 1874, a man (which the profession was almost exclusively composed of) could enter medical practice if he possessed a diploma. Most reputable practicing physicians received their training by serving an apprenticeship to the community's best-known doctor and after a year or two of "reading" received a license upon the recommendation of that doctor. If a young American doctor could afford it, he often studied in London, Edinburgh, Paris, or Berlin, which were considered the centers for the best medical training.

Medical practice was often carried on at drug stores. Without regulation or training, the druggist often diagnosed and prescribed over-the-counter drugs. Doctors often opened clinics and advertised their qualifications and their prices. Dr. Elias S. Cooper, founder of the medical school that later became Stanford Medical School, opened such a clinic in 1855. He advertised free surgical operations on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

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Cures that today would be considered "quaint" were often popular. One of these was based, not on scientific fact, but on observation of "the life-giving nature" of the topography and climate of the Western states. Adherents of this theory argued that these regions of southern California –San Diego, Pasadena, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara— and their accompanying weather patterns maintained atmospheres free of impurities, favorable temperatures, sunlight, and wide open spaces, all of which were considered conducive to healing.

It was not until the end of the century that scientific advances began to catch up with the medical needs of the public. Civil War hospital experiences and the new theories of bacteriology slowly produced changes in medical training and practice.

So, if you can imagine yourself becoming ill during the Victorian era, chances are you would be nursed at home unless you were very poor, and then you would be delivered to a recently established county hospital, which probably lessened your chances of recovery or even survival because of the unsanitary conditions that existed there.

Inside the home the sick were cared for by female family members. Little besides bed rest and home remedies was available as treatment. Doctors were usually consulted "when all else had failed." In rural areas of California, physicians were scarce and not always available. They rode a circuit of towns and villages to treat patients. It could be a couple of weeks before the doctor would revisit a community.

Not surprisingly, California Masons were in the forefront of providing relief to the sick and injured in the 19th century. In 1850, a cholera epidemic, one of the most dreaded and deadly of all diseases at the time, broke out in Sacramento. A history of the Masonic Homes of California tells us "Freemasons moved among the sick, attending to their wants, smoothed the pillow of the dying, and tenderly buried the dead. …" Three Masonic lodges raised "the astronomical figure" of $32,000 to continue to support a hospital at Sutter's Fort. To answer the question "Why do Masons do this for people they don't even know?" the reply was, "It is what a Mason is supposed to do. So we do it!"

This care of the seriously ill provided by people outside one's own immediate family was relatively rare at this time. Thus the Masons once again set a high standard for the relief of those who had nowhere else to turn.

While the delivery of health care in the United States in the 21st century is the focus of heated debate for perceived inadequacies, one has difficulty believing anyone would be willing to exchange what we have now for the way things were in the Victorian era.

It is not hard to imagine why.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Low-Income Seniors

If you are a Medicare beneficiary with limited income and resources, you may be able to get extra help paying for prescription drugs. Beginning January 1, 2006, a new program will provide prescription drug coverage under Medicare. If you have limited income and resources, you may be able to get help paying for your monthly premiums, deductibles, and co-payments under this prescription drug program.

If you have Medi-Cal (Medicaid) with prescription drug coverage and Medicare, Medicare and Supplemental Security Income, or if your state pays for your Medicare premiums, you automatically will get this extra help. You do not have to do anything.

From June through August 2005, Medicare beneficiaries who may be eligible for extra help will be mailed an application for help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs. If you do not receive an application in the mail or do not want to wait, you can get one by calling Social Security at **800/772-1213**. You can also learn more and apply online at **www.socialsecurity.gov**.

Visit the Masonic Homes of California Web Site

You can read about the latest developments in the Homes, download recent mailings to the membership, initiate an application, and learn all about the programs and services we provide on the Web site for the Masonic Homes of California. Please visit our site at **www.masonichome.org.**

Call for Masonic Assistance

A single phone call is all it takes to address your questions and need for services. So call us today if you are considering applying for admission to the Masonic Homes or for assistance through our Masonic Outreach Services (MOS) department at **888/466-3642 (888/HOME MHC).**

Wait Times for Admission

If you are considering admission to the Masonic Homes, we urge you to plan ahead. At this time, there is a 12- to 18-month wait for independent living units on both campuses and a 24- to 36-month wait for assisted-living units. To ensure that members' needs are promptly and effectively met, those on the waiting list with immediate needs are referred to Masonic Outreach Services (MOS) for assistance.

Information on Senior Services in your Community

Finding accurate information about the programs and services available to seniors and how to access them can be daunting and confusing. To help negotiate the maze of services and providers, we have compiled a list of resources for seniors in each county in California. We can help answer questions about providers of home care services, resources for Alzheimer's and dementia care, or long-term care insurance—whatever the issue may be, we will help track down and locate appropriate resources in your area. We may not have all the answers, but our commitment is to work with you on finding them.

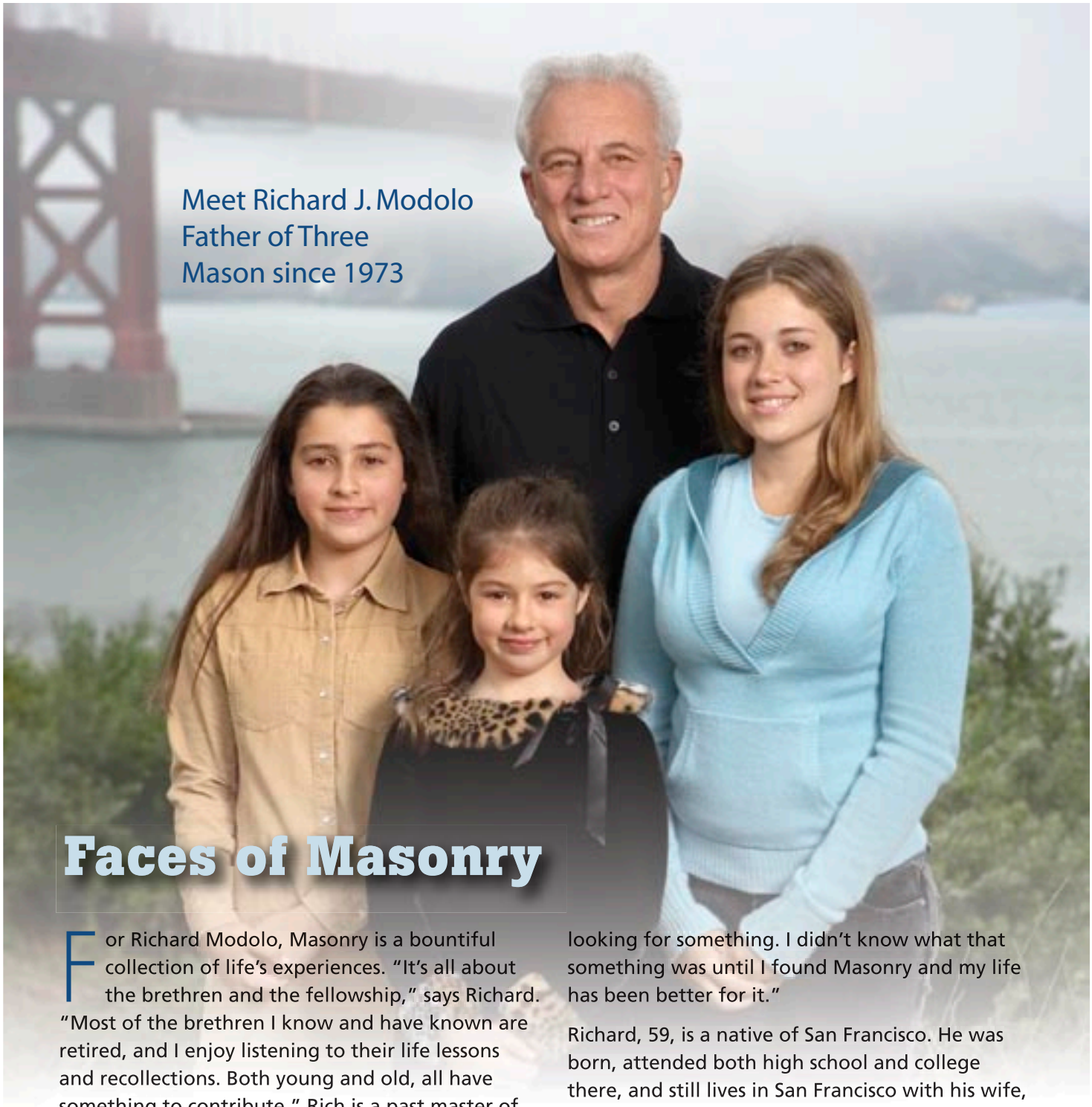
A call to our toll-free number, **888/466-3642**, is all that is needed to begin discussing your options with our trained staff. You can also e-mail us at **intake@mhcuc.org.**

Children's Services

For information on our children's program or to find out how to sponsor a child in need, please contact the Masonic Home for Children, 1650 Old Badillo Street, Covina, CA 91722, **626/251-2226**, **mespinoza@mhccov.org.**

Communications

The Masonic Homes have speakers available to come to your lodge or function to speak about the services available through the Homes and other issues related to aging. For more information, please contact the communications office at **510/675-1245** or **communications@mhcuc.org**. We look forward to hearing from you!



Meet Richard J. Modolo
Father of Three
Mason since 1973

Faces of Masonry

For Richard Modolo, Masonry is a bountiful collection of life's experiences. "It's all about the brethren and the fellowship," says Richard. "Most of the brethren I know and have known are retired, and I enjoy listening to their life lessons and recollections. Both young and old, all have something to contribute." Rich is a past master of California Lodge No. 1 and San Francisco Lodge No. 120, both in San Francisco. He received the Hiram Award in 2005, was venerable master of San Francisco Scottish Rite, and is currently the recorder for Asiya Shrine.

"Masonry has greatly impacted my life," shares Richard. "You might say I am in part a combination of all the brethren I have met. After leaving the U.S. Army and putting Vietnam behind me, I went looking for something. I didn't know what that something was until I found Masonry and my life has been better for it."

Richard, 59, is a native of San Francisco. He was born, attended both high school and college there, and still lives in San Francisco with his wife, Gabrielle, and his three daughters, Richelle, Sarah, and Kate. He enjoys collecting Golden Age comic books and working out. He has competed in Olympic-lifting, power-lifting, and body-building contests and is retired from Pacific Bell Telephone Company after working there 27 years.

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