



What Do the Saints John Mean to Me?

By Wor. Gerald L. Frey

Within Masonry we have several items which can be a bit confusing to both new and veteran Brethren, which unfortunately we have not been truly diligent in translating properly to the Fraternity. One of the better known but least understood of these is the Saints John. Although we have all heard of the Saints John during degree work, most of us cannot distinguish one from another.

In early or ancient Craft Masonry the Scottish Masons referred to three primary degrees: Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason as Saint John's Masonry. They believed there could be no other degrees, except these three, going so far as to say "The Grand Lodge of Scotland practices no degrees of Masonry but [sic] these." Seems pretty definitive, doesn't it?

Not to put a bump in the road, but there is also a Saint John the Almoner or Saint John of Jerusalem, whom many cite as the true patron of our Masonic Order, being canonized by both Roman and Greek churches for his unselfish service to pilgrims in the Holy Lands. Perhaps some find this interesting and might make a point of his names being an indicator, even a right to be the patron saint of Masonry. Being but a singular individual though, would leave Masonry short of a saint, so we shall continue our research.

To examine the Masonic Saints John, a closer look at some of the source documents finds a reasonable starting point – the Holy Saints John. Even here it is not obvious that the Lodge of the Holy Saints John is more than a place, but personalities and principles.

First let's move the Lodge of the Holy Saints John to its proper place. This Lodge is considered by most Masonic scholars to be the premier Lodge of Masonry, being located in Jerusalem where the Temple was constructed by our predecessors. It has been distinguished as being the first Lodge of Freemasonry from which all others have emanated.

In ritual around the world, many Masons dedicate their Lodge to the Holy Saints John, followed by an invocation that "every Brother may revere their character and imitate their virtues." Clues to look for here are the words 'saints' and 'their' indicating more than one Saint John.

We find another clue with the point (representing an individual brother) within a Circle (the course of the sun), which also represents the boundary line of his duty to God and man, and the two perfect parallel lines the patron saints of the order – Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist. It looks like we are getting closer. The two perfect parallel lines represent the Saints John (the Baptist and the Evangelist). One of these perfect parallel lines rest on the North side of the circle, while the other rests on the Southern side of the same circle.

To find the true ancient Masonic signification we must recall that the two particular points of the sun's course (the Circle), are found in the zodiac signs of Cancer and Capricorn and are astronomically distinguished as the summer and winter solstices. "When the sun is in these points, it has reached its greatest northern and southern declination, and produces the most evident effects on the temperature of the seasons, and on the length of the days and nights. These points, if we suppose the circle to represent the sun's course, will be indicated by the points where the parallel lines touch the circle, or the parallels indicate the limits of the sun's extreme northern and southern declination, when arrives at the solstitial points of

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Grand Master's Address

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Freemasonry is alive and well in the Commonwealth, thus proclaims the Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. Brethren, the turnouts for my visits have all been outstanding! Every event has been a time of happiness, enjoyment, fellowship, and enthusiasm.

Everyone is embracing the “back to basics” theme of **Forget-Not-The-Duties**. Many stories are being shared about Brothers who were fence riders now coming back into the fold of doing what is right as Masons. Young people who want to be a part of something, not just anything, but something that makes a difference. Freemasonry is the way they feel they can meet these needs. Are we ready for this new wave of men who want to be dedicated to being good men becoming better men? Men who are Masons are bringing in their sons into Masonry. Sons whose grandfathers were Masons are bringing in their fathers. Men who were disappointed because they were never asked to be a Mason are finding out that they have to ask and are joining.

Freemasonry is beginning to be an item of interest and is being discussed by John Q. Public. My question to you, my Brothers, as Masons, are you ready for the questions that are sure to come? What are Masons? What do Masons do? What are the characteristics of a Mason? How can I find the Lodge nearest to where I live? How do I find out who to contact to find out more about Masonry? What are the benefits of being a Mason? Every Mason in Virginia must be prepared to answer these questions, because I feel sure they are coming. Also the answers we give will cause our membership to increase or not.

I have talked to quite a few men since I became Grand Master and several of these new acquaintances have applied or are in the process of becoming Master Masons. My Facebook page (www.facebook.com/billrorer) created by the new Media Task Force is being viewed every day (accessible only to registered Facebook members). Being in the eye of the public should make us more aware that we must **Forget-Not-The-Duties** and our Masonic obligations. I sincerely believe that if we strive to live by these three principles...Do what is right, practice the golden rule, and strive for excellence in all we do...then our gentle Craft will continue on the way to once again occupying a place of dignity and respect in our communities, our nation and our world.

Given with Brotherly love,
William E. Rorer, Jr.
William Earle Rorer, Jr.
Grand Master



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Grand Master's Calendar

DECEMBER

- 15 Hill City Lodge No. 183, 150th Anniversary
- 19 Prince George Lodge No. 115, Installation
- 26 Saints John Day, Williamsburg
Williamsburg Lodge No. 6, Installation
- 29 Khedive Shrine Center, Knights of Mecca Annual
Dinner and Installation
- 30 Mariner Lodge No. 215, Table Lodge

JANUARY

- 4 Hampton Commandery No. 17
- 6 Warwick Royal Arch Chapter No. 80
- 7 Norfolk Lodge No. 1
- 8 Official Visit, District 25, Lynchburg
- 9 Official Visit, District 37, South Boston
- 11 Williamsburg Lodge No. 6
- 12 Chickahominy Lodge No. 286
- 13 MAHOVA Board Meeting
Strategic Planning Meeting
- 14 Sharon Lodge No. 327
- 15 Official Visit, District 11, Saluda
- 16 Peyton Randolph Lodge of Research No. 1774
Official Visit, District 56, Virginia Beach
- 18 Yorktown Lodge No. 205
- 19 Mann Page Lodge No. 157
- 22 GALA to benefit The Grand Lodge Library and
Museum of Virginia
- 23 Official Visit, District 33 & 34, Suffolk

MASONIC TRIVIA

Why do Freemasons recite “blood curdling” penalties?

There is an honest difference of opinion. First it must be emphasized: These penalties have never been carried out. It must be remembered that few men could read and write, they had to depend on clerics and other learned men for information. They learned “by mouth to ear.” This is one reason the early Masonic catechisms contained so many doublets and triplets such as: duly and truly; worthy and well qualified; conceal, hele (to cover), and never reveal; and so on. The breaking of vows was considered morally foul and this concept should still prevail. Reciting the medieval torture would imprint wise and serious concern on one’s mind. It should be mentioned that John J. Robinson in his Born in Blood: The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry has another explanation for the penalties. He believes these were developed by the persecuted Knights Templar (not the same as the present day Templars) as protection against spies of the king and pope because the Knights were outlawed by church and state. However, it was the seventeenth century before penalties are mentioned. Today, and as far as can be determined, the only penalties suffered by Freemasons are expulsion from the Fraternity, suspension, or reprimand.

(From Allen E. Roberts’ Masonic Trivia and Facts.)

Footnotes for the article on Page 1:

1. “The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining Its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols” Albert G. Mackey, M.D.
2. The “lex scripta,” or written law of Masonry, is derived from a variety of sources, and was framed at different periods.

Mission and Vision Statements of The Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M., of Virginia

The **mission** of the Grand Lodge of Virginia is to teach and perpetuate a way of life that promotes the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God and to assist its Lodges to grow and prosper.

The **vision** of the Grand Lodge of Virginia is to be the premier organization composed of men of integrity and character, who are honest, true to their word, believe in God, are devoted to family, charitable in their community, and courteous and helpful to each other.

Resolving Conflict by Meeting our Obligations

By Wor. Stephen L. Young

On a few occasions, I have observed a paradox in Masonry – espousing lofty principles and then sometimes acting in petty ways. We take on sacred obligations, then we sometimes act in ways inconsistent with those obligations. One of the most troubling inconsistencies between principle and action is the way we allow conflicts to develop between members of our Fraternity and how we allow these conflicts to linger, without resolution.

Fortunately, this does not happen often, but when it does, it is the obligation of the Worshipful Master to address it clearly and swiftly. It is also the obligation of each Brother to work to resolve these differences and when we are a party to the conflict, we have a duty as a Master Mason to reconcile with our Brother. These obligations are at the core of what it means to be a Master Mason and should compel us to exemplify the tenet of Brotherly Love, and take the necessary steps toward reconciliation. I believe we should take our guidance from the many examples of friendship and Brotherly Love presented to us as moral lessons in our ancient Craft.

The Degree of Entered Apprentice is marked by a passage of scripture that is as simple and direct as it is instructive: “Behold, how good and pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity; it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments: As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.” (Psalm 133: 1 – 3) This goal of unity and the rewards it brings are one of the first lessons we learn in Masonry.

Another early lesson is the importance of Charity. Charity is not merely the donation of money to a worthy Brother or another cause, it is also that generosity of spirit that allows us to forgive a wrong, admit a mistake, and practice another tenet of Masonry; the tenet of Brotherly Love.

In the Degree of Fellowcraft, we are reminded that our ancient operative Brethren worked six days in the quarries before receiving wages. Their work was physical labor with an expectation that the result would be “good work, square work, just such work as is needed for the Temple.” Our labor in the speculative quarries of friendship and Brotherly Love can be just as demanding. As speculative Masons, we are building a temple of living stones, our ‘work’ also needs to be “good work, square work,” if we are to be successful in our endeavors. It is not easy to overcome our pride and the hurt feelings that come from a perceived wrong, or to admit a mistake. But sometimes, this is the labor required of us. Rest assured that Master’s wages will be paid to those who can accomplish this difficult task.

An idea that is made clear in the Degree of Master Mason is our time in our earthly Lodges is fleeting, each day slips by as grains of sand in an hour glass, almost imperceptibly. This is a potent message – each of us should attempt to finish our work here before we – or the Brother we have a difference with – may be called to the Celestial Lodge above. Reconciliations are tasks that should be completed, you must take steps to accomplish this work while there is still an opportunity.

Finally, at each stated communication, we are reminded how Master Masons should meet, act, and part. We should meet by the plumb – with actions that are upright and unbiased. We should act on the level – no difference in our station in life or past disagreements should divide us. And we should part upon the square – each feeling that the other has dealt fairly with us according to Masonic principles.

Each of these ideas represent only a few of the lessons of friendship and brotherly love available to us as Masons. Let me conclude by quoting the words of Worshipful James Rockland Meehan, Past Master of Lee Lodge No. 209, who said, “I know that each man who enters by the West Gate is a good man. At least two of my Brothers have vouched for him. Many others may have spoken on his behalf. An investigating committee has recommended him. And all present during balloting have agreed that he should be admitted. I know I can accept him as a Brother, because my Brethren guarding the West Gate have admitted him to the Lodge.”

It is worth adding that any man who has been accepted as a Brother, is worthy of an attempt to reconcile, unless he has been expelled or suspended. So how are we to proceed in reconciliation? Maybe a way to start would be at the beginning, by exchanging the Entered Apprentice grip and saying “Behold, how good and pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity!” That you do begin the reconciliation process, is more important than how you begin fulfilling these Masonic principles, from time immemorial, and your Brethren will support you in this important work.

The Best First Step To More Light

Royal Arch Masonry – Uncovering the Lost Secrets

The Path to More Light in Masonry... In each of the first three degrees of Freemasonry, the candidate expresses a desire for light. But once he has been raised, we tend to leave him to his own devices. Those true seekers will find the Royal Arch degrees to be the best “first step” on the path to more light in Masonry.

The six Royal Arch degrees are intimately related to the first three degrees in Masonry. They detail the story of the completion, dedication, destruction, and rebuilding of King Solomon’s Temple including the recovery of the lost secrets.

The Royal Arch Degree completes the Blue Lodge Mason’s basic instruction and prepares him for a lifetime of seeking light. In Virginia, our ancient Constitution of Masonry (Chapter 3, Section 4, Number 7) states, “to exercise all degrees of the Ancient Craft, and consequently the Royal Arch.” This clearly shows the intimate connection between the Blue Lodge and the Royal Arch from ancient times.

Mark Master Degree

The first degree in Royal Arch Masonry is the Mark Master Degree, which is a wonderful expansion of the Fellowcraft Degree. It explains the payment of wages in much greater detail and the necessity of displaying your skill in the quarries in order to earn those wages. Each craftsman must design his own peculiar mark and receives a pointed lesson regarding how this mark is used to bond Brother Mark Masters to each other. Finally a lesson is given regarding “abiding the law,” even when it does not please us.

Past Master Degree

The Past Master Degree is a modern accommodation to the ancient custom that only those who have presided over a Lodge could receive the Royal Arch Degree. This degree provides several pointed lessons regarding one’s difficulties, rights, and responsibilities when presiding over a Lodge and confers upon the candidate the title of being a “virtual” Past Master. The Grand Lodge of Virginia considers these lessons so important that the conferral of this degree is required before a Brother can be elected as Warden in his Lodge.

The Council Degrees: Select Master and Royal Master Degrees

The two Council Degrees (Select Master and Royal Master) are shorter in length than the other degrees in Royal Arch Masonry and are usually conferred at the same meeting. In most other Grand Jurisdictions, they are not included in the Royal Arch degrees but come under a completely separate organization called the Cryptic Council. These degrees are referred to as “cryptic” because they introduce the candidate to a secret work which took place underground and to a conversation which took place on the evening prior to the death of one of our first three Grand Masters. The candidate learns of the leader of a plot to extort certain secrets and why this conversation caused him to recant. In Virginia these degrees are included in Royal Arch Masonry because they are a very necessary piece of the puzzle which is solved at a later time in the Royal Arch Degree.

Most Excellent Master

The Most Excellent Master Degree is a peculiar to American Masonry. It is the rich story of the completion and dedication of King Solomon’s Temple and a re-enactment of the ceremonies surrounding that event. Those craftsmen found worthy were received and acknowledged Most Excellent Masters by King Solomon.

Royal Arch Degree

The Royal Arch Degree begins with a recounting of the destruction of the Temple, the taking of the Jews into Babylonian exile, the overthrow of Babylon by King Cyrus of Persia, and his order that the Temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt. The candidates portray three Most Excellent Masters returning from that exile to aid and assist in that rebuilding. While clearing some rubbish, they discover the secret underground work described in the Select Master Degree, and in spite of the difficulties and dangers involved, eventually discover the lost secrets referred to in the second section of the Master Mason Degree. The lost is finally found and restored. This degree also teaches that there is no substitute for truth and that the discovery of concealed things comes through hard work, persistence, and personal risk.

For more information or to obtain a petition, please contact the nearest Royal Arch Chapter or the office of the Grand Secretary, Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia, 4101 Nine Mile Road, Richmond, VA 23223-4399. The office can also be reached via phone (804.222.9120) or e-mail: gsecgrac@comcast.net Their website is: <http://www.VirginiaRoyalArch.org>

What Do the Saints John Mean to Me?

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Cancer, the 21st of June (summer-Southern), and Capricorn, 22nd of December (winter-Northern),” and account for their subsequent application of the two Saints John anniversaries have been placed by the church near these days.

Masonic tradition tells us “that our ancient Brethren dedicated their Lodges to King Solomon, because he was our first Most Excellent Grand Master; but modern Masons dedicate their Lodges to Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist, because they were two eminent Christian patrons of Masonry.”

Saint John the Baptist was a rough and ready sort of prophet of the old covenant, a rough ashlar if you will. By being able to endure the harsh country, he was able to withstand the rigors of his mission which was among the people of the country not the city dwellers. Saint John the Baptist is a worthy patron, by the mystical ablation to which he subjected his proselytes, and by announcing the approach of Christ, might well be considered as the Grand Hierophant of the Church. It therefore seems only fitting that the summer clime should be his feast day, 21st of June, the summer solstice. This was regulated in the first edition of the Book of Constitutions item number 5 of the thirty-nine “General Regulations,” adopted “at the annual assembly and feast held at Stationers’ Hall on Saint John the Baptist’s day, 1721,” established this day as not just a day of feasting and fellowship but a day to attend chapel as a Masonic community. Masonically, he represents the Northern perfect parallel line about the circle, the summer solstice or Cancer. As Saint John the Baptist is the more “rugged” of the Saints John, he more closely emulates the rough ashlar situated in the Northeast corner of a Lodge.

Saint John the Evangelist’s feast day is the preamble to an act passed in 1425, during the reign of Henry VI of England, just five centuries after the meeting at York, stating, “by the *yearly congregations* and confederacies made by the Masons in their *general assemblies*, the good course and effect of the statute of laborers were openly violated and broken.” Though this act forbade such meetings, it was never put into force. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth another record of the General Assembly indicates it was held in York on the 27th December, 1561. It should be noted even then suspicions of Masonic secrecy could be misunderstood – Queen Elizabeth sent an armed detachment to dissolve the meeting (a copy is still preserved of the regulations which were adopted by a similar assembly held in 1663). The festival of Saint John the Evangelist; in these regulations it is declared that private Lodges ‘shall give an account of all their acceptations made during the year to the General Assembly.’

The officers of a Lodge are elected annually on the festival of Saint John the Evangelist, or at the meeting immediately previous; but, in this latter case, the duties of the offices do not commence until Saint John’s day, December 27th, which may be considered as the beginning of the Masonic year, from one festival of Saint John the Evangelist to the next.

The character of Saint John the Evangelist is notable in several respects from his contemplative nature. He is associated with the writing of ‘Gospel of John’, ‘the first, second and third Epistles of John, and the ‘Book of Revelations.’ While the mysterious and emblematic nature of the Apocalypse mode of teaching adopted by Saint John the Evangelist is equally reasonable to the practices of the Fraternity. He was known for his counsel, ability to maintain confidences, scholarship, and loyalty. Masonically, he represents the Southern perfect parallel line about the circle, the winter solstice or Capricorn. As Saint John the Evangelist is the more polished of the Saints John, he more closely emulates the perfect ashlar situated in the Southeast corner of a Lodge.

As Masons today, we should find these two dates on the calendars, mark them as special days, and revive this Masonic tradition. There is such a procession in Williamsburg, Virginia each Saints John Day, following the same path from the Lodge to Bruton Parish Chapel to hear a Masonic Sermon delivered as it would have been delivered in the late 18th century. These days also serve as an open house for Williamsburg citizens and our families to join in our feasting and learn that unlike Queen Elizabeth they need not send an armed detachment, only bring their appetites. Saints John Day, in Williamsburg, is inclusive to all Masons and all Masonic organizations, e. g., York Rite, Scottish Rite, Shriners, and Sojourners. This December the procession will occur on December 26th due to the 27th being a Sunday. The procession will commence from the Lodge at 1:00 PM.

Committee on Membership Report

By Rt. Wor. William E. Hershey, Chairman
Committee on Membership

The End Of The Year Marks A New Beginning

While this December issue of the Virginia Masonic Herald supplement marks the last issue for 2009, it also marks the beginning of the term for the Worshipful Master who will be elected and installed this month. Likewise, the District Deputy Grand Master is most likely making plans to begin his official visits in January.

If you have been honored to be appointed District Deputy Grand Master for your respective district, I assume you have reviewed the Visit Report you must submit when you finish your Official Visit to the Lodges in your District. No doubt some of the questions on the Visit Report Form will be easier to answer than others. I would like to reach out to the District Deputy with an offer of any assistance you may require when you go about your duties with regards to supporting the Grand Master's Goals for membership in the upcoming year.

To the newly installed Worshipful Master, whether this is your first time in the East or, in some cases, serving another term; I offer you my assistance. I want to work with you as you work to support your District Deputy to accomplish the Grand Master's goals for membership. Our Grand Master's Goals for membership are aimed at strengthening the Lodges and are pretty straight forward. They address attracting new members and retaining those who are already our Brothers. With the use of the Bring A Friend Night Program, adapted to your Lodge, we can support the Grand Master's goal of attracting new members. In support of the goal for retaining members, the Lodges need to examine how they might set up mentoring programs for:

- Keeping the membership active in Lodge activities
- Getting non-attending members back to Lodge
- Reducing suspensions for non-payment of dues
- Reducing demits from the Lodge.

Clearly, the Worshipful Master rules and governs his Lodge. Therefore, how the Lodge and ultimately the district work together to accomplish the goals our Grand Master sets for us are only accomplished on an individual Lodge basis. The message I want to leave you with is that there are resources available to you at no cost in the areas of attracting new members and retaining current members.

In closing, I would tell the 2010 Worshipful Masters and District Deputies that if they are in need of assistance to establish programs relating to membership there is help out there. The Committee on Membership and the District Membership Coordinators stand ready to assist and await your invitation to become involved. I wish you all the best for the New Year and hope to see many of you at the Division Leadership Conferences next year. In the meantime, if I can help give me a call at 540-972-1692 or send an e-mail to wehershey@comcast.net. I look forward to meeting and hearing from you.

Grand Lodge Library and Museum Gala Affair

On January 22, 2010 between 7:00 and 9:00 PM at the Grand Lodge Administration Building's second floor, a Gala Affair will be held to help raise funds for the Grand Lodge Library, Museum, and Historical Foundation. This gala affair is especially for those people interested in Virginia's Masonic history through the eyes of our Fraternity. Many Masons were instrumental in forming the history of Virginia and protecting the commonwealth. Listen first hand as various historians tell stories of great Masonic Virginians and patriots. There will be several talks about such Virginians by qualified speakers as well as an overview of the museum and library's contents and how to use the library and museum.

The purpose of the library and museum is to preserve, conserve, collect, and store the records and memorabilia of Masonic history in Virginia and make the information available to our members, researchers, and scholars. The library and museum contain over 8,000 historical written works and the visual and decorative arts of Freemasonry in Virginia. It contains many Past Grand Master portraits, display cases holding collections of Masonic aprons, jewels, gavels, trowels, regalia, china and various types of furniture with Masonic histories attached to them are on display throughout the museum room.

There will be heavy hors d'oeuvres, wine, and other light beverages for the attendees. The gala will be open to 100 guests only and a \$50 donation is requested per guest. Some of the speakers for the evening are Most Worshipful William Earle Rorer, Jr., Grand Master, Most Worshipful James Dean Cole (2001), Most Worshipful John Randall Quinley (2005), Worshipful Mark Kenton Brinkley, and Worshipful Richard H. Jones.

For further information, please contact Worshipful Richard H. Jones at 110 Wilderness Lane, Williamsburg, Virginia 23188 or via his phone number 757.566.0506.

District Educational Officer and Lodge Programs

By Rt. Wor. Walter W. Young, Grand Provost

Every month the Committee On Masonic Education produces a new Lodge and District Educational Officer (DEO) program. These Lodge programs are distributed to the Worshipful Master and Secretary of each Lodge for use by the Lodge Educational Officer (LEO) when presenting a program at their stated communication. The District Educational Officer program is distributed to all the DEOs in the Commonwealth to be taught by the DEO during the first fifteen minutes of all District ritual classes. This has the backing and support of our Grand Master, Grand Lecturer, and the Grand Provost. These programs should teach the meaning of our beautiful ritual or the lessons of our core values and beliefs. The DEO and District Instructor of Work (DIW) should coordinate their efforts, so the DEO program complements the ritual class the DIW is teaching. It does not make a lot of sense for the DEO to present a program on the Entered Apprentice degree, when the DIW is teaching the Master Mason's degree.

As Grand Provost, I am trying to improve the quality of these programs and know there are a lot of Masons in Virginia who have the talent, skill, and knowledge to produce a program which is informative, well-written, and teaches the core values of Freemasonry. Therefore, I invite you to send me a program, Masonic topic of your choice, to be distributed to all the Lodges and DEOs to teach our Brethren these values. The program will also be placed on the Committee on Masonic Education's (COME) webpage for use by the profane as well as the enlightened. The only restriction is there can be no secret work included in the program. DEO programs should be 10 minutes or less and Lodge programs should be twenty minutes or less. If you are looking for an opportunity to contribute to the instruction and education of our Officers and Brethren, here is your chance. Thanks for your continued support and with your assistance we will better educate our Lodge Line Officers and our Masonic Brethren.

If there are any questions I can answer or you want to send an article, please contact me at grandprovost@verizon.net.