



Education Monthly

May 2013

This month's edition is devoted to a paper taken from a talk given by R.W.Bro Staye on his official visit to Defenders Lodge No 561 in January 2013. There is also important information about several forthcoming Masonic Education conferences. R.W.Bro. John Forster, (editor)

Thoughts on the Tracing Board

R.W. Bro. Russell Staye, District Deputy Grand Master Ottawa District 2

What is a tracing board? Quite simply it is a platform for writing, supported by a frame or trestle to which sheets of wax, parchment, paper, or any other substance that can easily be written or engraved upon, may be attached. From this frame comes the other name for a tracing board– the Trestle Board. Some jurisdictions in fact refer to it as such, while here in Ontario we generally retain that term to define a Master or D.D.G.M.'s plans for the year.

The importance of the tracing board to the operative masons of antiquity was paramount. It served a purpose for those in charge of building projects great and small. The sheets attached to the board were used to design both the broad outlines of structures and to visibly depict the expectations for complex pieces of work. Naturally enough only an expert would be permitted, let alone possess the skill and confidence to put pencil or stylus to its surface.

The 19th Century Masonic Scholar Albert G. Mackey of South Carolina powerfully, if imaginatively, conjured up the preeminent importance attached to the designs laid out on the tracing board thus: "The trestle board was the cradle which nursed the infancy of such mighty monuments as the Cathedrals of Strasburg and Cologne; and as they advanced in stature the trestle board became the guardian spirit that directed their growth"

Yet as with the other immovable jewels we are encouraged to moralize upon this symbol that sits before every Worshipful Master in the jurisdiction of our Grand Lodge, which brings us to the question my students seem to ask repeatedly – "So what?"

Alone, perhaps, the tracing board might suggest the existence of a grand plan of life. One laid out with precision: each layer building perfectly upon the next, adorned with exquisite moments of beauty, if we are but willing to follow the Grand Design. Taken in conjunction with the other immovable jewels, the rough and perfect ashlar they may be taken to represent the entirety of a man's life. His quest to shape the rough block hewn from the quarry into something displaying its full "perfect" potential; returning from time to time to consult the master plan for guidance.

Certainly the interpretation exist, but for me it is a reminder of another goal, one which I see repeated throughout the Entered Apprentice Degree – the need for critical thought, and for consideration. This is a theme that begins for every mason before the ceremony of his initiation even begins – when three questions are posed to him. "Do you believe in a supreme being? Do you believe that Supreme Being will punish vice and reward virtue? Do you believe that Supreme Being has revealed his will to man?"

Yes, we all answer these questions perfunctorily, but in reality these three particular enquiries sand our own personal understanding of them lie at the very heart of religious thought and doctrine. Throughout the course of the ceremony the candidate is repeatedly questioned and as we know is shown various symbols and signs.

None of us today perceive these signs and symbols now as we did the first time they were explained to us. Nor do most of us have quite the same answers to questions posed or understanding of injunctions communicated.

So for me I do not see the tracing board as an emblem of a final plan, or of inked in certitude. To me it stands as a reminder of the growth we experience as members of the craft. I do not see a finished design but a work in progress, with alterations made here and there to improve the whole. I encourage you to think, to engage, and yes to moralize on the lessons and symbols around us.

R.W.Bro. Russell Staye

MASONIC EDUCATION CONFERENCES 2013

There are to be 3 conferences held this year in Ottawa, Thunder Bay and London respectively.

OTTAWA Saturday, May 25th at the Ottawa Masonic Centre. 9am to 4pm Tickets for the event are \$15 and include lunch. There will be a keynote speaker, R.W.Bro Winston Kinnard and papers given by local speakers. Brethren are invited to submit abstracts of papers that they would like to present. The presentations should be approximately 20 minutes in length plus time for questions and discussion. Later in the day there will be two concurrent seminar sessions, one exclusively for Installed Masters. Please submit your application and conference fee of \$15 to :

Mr. Wayne Keech, 195 Barrow Cres. Kanata ON K2L 2K9 Please make cheques out to "Ottawa Masonic Conference" We'd like 4 papers and will select them from those submitted. They should be submitted to forster.john@icloud.com or awlevere@yahoo.com Further information can be obtained by contacting R.W.Bro John Forster, 79, Birchbank Cres. Ottawa ON K2M 2J9

THUNDER BAY. Saturday June 1st from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. A morning conference in conjunction with the Grand Master's visit to Thunder Bay to celebrate the Centennial of CONNAUGHT LODGE No. 511. Venue is Connaught Lodge rooms, 327 Frederica St., W., Thunder Bay. There will be several invited speakers (R.W.Bros. John Forster. Iain Wates, Peter Breitsprecher, Robbie Manz and V.W.Bro Dale Graham. Admission is free and no prior reservations are needed

LONDON. Saturday Sept 7th. London Masonic Centre, 453 Dufferin Ave, London. A full day conference. Please submit abstracts. Speakers will be chosen from them, along with a number of invited orators. Will include lunch. Cost will be \$25. Please make cheques out to **Mr. Randy Hearn, 66 Stephen Moore Dr., RR#5, Komoka, ON, N0L 1R0** . Those who would like to be a presenter please send a brief (100 word) synopsis to **W.Bro. Rick Cadotte 9 Braesyde Ave. London ON N5W 1V2, e-mail: rickcadotte@hotmail.com**

As usual I'd ask that you pass this edition on to as many masons as you can.

All of these monthly newsletters and much else are available on the Grand Lodge web site. From my correspondence I find that many people are unable to access this. And others as yet have not tried. The information that is available on the web site is growing steadily and will continue to do so.

Instructions for accessing the web site members' section are below. Please use your web site often. It is becoming a very important mode of communication.

<p>Web Site Member Area Access: http://www.grandlodge.on.ca/ >> Login Username: your 6 digit Grand Lodge Certificate number [from your actual Certificate, Lodge Secretary, or Email webmaster@grandlodge.on.ca] Password: Initial password = your 6 digit Grand Lodge Certificate number. [change on first access</p>

and provide your Email address, to be used if you ever require a password reset]