

Scottish Rite

The First Two Hundred Years

By Jim S. Deyo

Acknowledgments

The history of the Valley of Columbus, AASR, is not unlike the history of Masonry from the founding of symbolic Freemasonry in England in 1717, to the establishment of the Scottish Rite in America in 1801, followed by the chartering of the North Masonic Jurisdiction Aug. 5, 1813, then the formation of the Valley of Columbus in 1851, plus all the trials and tribulations that ensued until we arrive at Masonry as observed and practiced in the 21st Century. Each has its own story. What follows are the undertakings of Ill. and MWB Jim S. Deyo, previously published in the Chronicles of the Valley of Columbus, AASR, NMJ, USA.

The Scottish Rite Temple was casually referred to as the downtown Masonic Temple, but the building was the property of the Valley of Columbus. It was built in three sections and each had its own front door and address. For years the reference was to 34 N. 4th Street. Later, the reference was changed to 32 N. 4th Street in deference to the 32nd Scottish Rite degree.

Reference and research materials in "the First 200 Years" include, but are not limited to Supreme Council Proceedings, The Magnificent Heritage (Valley of Cincinnati), Masonic Reviews, Supreme Council Documentation, Ohio Council of Deliberation records, writings of various luminaries and the personal experiences of the author.

INTRODUCTION

...whence we came

The 200th anniversary of the Supreme Council of the Northern Jurisdiction prompts me to share with you from whence the Supreme Council for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction came; the two lost decades of Freemasonry in the states and the difficulties in Charleston, as well as the Northern Jurisdiction; the history of John James Joseph Gourgas who is known as the "Conservator of the Rite"; the original organization of Scottish Rite in Columbus in 1851 followed by its disappearance until 1877; conspiracy to destroy Scottish Rite Masonry in Ohio in 1884; resolution of the issues and the new beginning.

Reviewing the facts, it is seen that John James Joseph Gourgas made rapid progress in Freemasonry, having gone from Entered Apprentice in 1806 to Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret, 32 degrees in the same year of which Gourgas became a member of the Bideaud Sublime Grand Consistory. I must also share with you that soon after Gourgas received his degrees in the Bideaud Consistory, one Joseph Cerneau arrived in New York in 1806 and established another Sovereign Grand Consistory in 1807.Scottish

Upon the arrival of Emanuel De La Motta, Treasurer General of the Supreme Council of Charleston in 1813 in New York, he learned of the higher grades of Scottish Rite in New York. He had gone to the North to recover health in a more favorable climate where he came upon a Masonic situation which both he and his Supreme Council associates at Charleston knew nothing. His investigation ultimately prompted the determination to recognize the Bideaud body. He received no information whatever from the Cerneau Sovereign Grand Consistory when he interviewed its leaders. He thereupon, decided to legalize the Bideaud body which had placed all records at his disposal for examination. and to establish a second Supreme Council in the United States as authorized by Article V of the Grand Constitutions of 1786.

On August 5, 1813 Emanuel De La Motta of the Supreme Council of Charleston (Southern Jurisdiction) acting as the Grand Commander in a “special sitting” elevated Bro. Gourgas to the rank and dignity of Sovereign Grand Inspector General 33°, along with three other Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Masons and members of the Bideaud Consistory. The Grand and Supreme Council of the Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Inspectors of the 33°, of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite for the Northern Masonic District and Jurisdiction of the United States of America was organized, and Daniel D. Tompkins was chosen first Sovereign Grand Commander and John James Joseph Gourgas was named Grand Secretary.

We ask ourselves why Ill John James Joseph Gourgas is so celebrated within the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction but as we survey the history of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, we have a clear understanding of his contributions to the Rite. For it was on March 7, 1832 that the second Sovereign Grand Commander, Ill. Bro. Sampson Simson 33°, resigned and Ill. Bro. Gourgas became the third Sovereign Grand Commander, a position he held until 1851.

It is likely that Simpson’s resignation was influenced by the Anti-Masonic movements which nearly extinguished the light of Freemasonry during the 20 years following the scandal of the “Morgan Affair” of 1826. The Anti-Masonic Party was formed in upstate New York in 1828, and during this period Masons were discharged from employment, expelled from churches, and denied many rights they previously enjoyed. Masonic activity ceased and thousands of Masons under varying degrees of pressure, abandoned the Craft. However, enough loyal brethren remained to enable the fraternity to emerge from the trouble, and among them was Ill. Bro. Gourgas. It is difficult to overstate his contributions to Scottish Rite Freemasonry. While the Supreme Council was inactive, Ill. Bro. Gourgas guarded the records and maintained contact with others. As Anti-Masonry swept the country and nearly eradicated the fraternity, he kept the Rite operational. He dedicated 45 years of loyalty to the Rite for which he earned the title “Conservator of the Rite”.

The John James Joseph Gourgas era

With the establishment of the Northern Supreme Council in 1813, a new epoch was entered upon by Gourgas and his associates. The paucity of records has often been seized upon as evidence that there were no activities on Gourgas’ part until well into the forties. The letters cited, and others which are extremely numerous between 1822 and 1832, prove Gourgas’ Masonic zeal, while at the same time supporting his position that the degrees were not to be cheapened by being peddled promiscuously. The mushroom growth of the Cerneau bodies, and their ultimate collapse under the Hicks and St Laurent regimes, confirm the wisdom of Gourgas’ attitude.

No other bodies were established but in 1820-21 Albany Lodge of Perfection, originally founded in 1787, were revived under the old Rite of Perfection regulations, and it together with some other bodies related to it, came under the Supreme Council of New York in 1828. This followed after Gourgas had learned, to his amazement, that the Charleston Supreme Council had elevated brethren of bodies within the jurisdiction of the Northern Supreme Council. However, it should be said in extenuation of the circumstances, the acts were committed by Grand Commander Moses Holbrook, 33°, M.D., after his elevation to office in Charleston. He had no personal knowledge of the events of 1813-14 by De La Motta, nor were there any records to consult, as extensive conflagrations in Charleston, especially one in 1819, had destroyed the early archives of his Supreme Council. When the facts were called to his attention, the irregularities were promptly and most amicably adjusted. A lively correspondence was commenced between Gourgas and Holbrook, which ran from 1826 to 1832, and it is from their letters—as well as from Giles Fonda Yates 33rd degree that we can reconstruct in detail the history of the Scottish Rite in the United States during this period.

The correspondence between these two leaders of Scottish Rite Freemasonry “refutes the belief that the Southern and the Northern Supreme Councils were entirely inactive prior to 1843.” This is not the case. Correspondence reveals how heavily the Southern Jurisdiction leaned upon its sturdy offspring. The anti-Masonic excitement of 1826-1840 wreaked havoc with Freemasonry in the United States; the cholera epidemic of 1832 contributed its part toward halting social and economic affairs; and the financial crash of 1837 put an effective stop to anything that savored a revival of old customs. It was not until the ‘40s that the crushed Masonic life of the two previous decades could be resumed, and new and sturdier foundations laid to every endeavor of human activity. These things must be borne in mind as we follow Gourgas and his associates during their trying years.

Difficulties with Cerneau elements in Charleston in 1823, brought active members of the Charleston Supreme Council into the picture. Dr. Holbrook, Lieutenant Grand Commander, opened correspondence with Gourgas early in 1826 (he became Grand Commander October 27, 1826.) The loss of rituals and documents at Charleston induced Holbrook to seek aid from Gourgas. He wrote the following:

“We had our papers nearly consumed by fire three times within the last forty years. Many of these were burnt in 1810— mostly records, letters, returns, curtains etc. etc. Could we in any way purchase a “big Tuilleur” I should be pleased to possess a list of the names of the Supreme Council for France and of their officers.”

Other letters of similar import could be quoted, showing how Holbrook relied upon Gourgas for essential information and advice. Gourgas not only furnished Holbrook with the texts of all the rituals that were known at the time, but he drew upon his own collection, gathered from many sources. He also furnished the Southern Supreme Council with the transcripts of the Grand Constitutions and the Secret Constitutions. These were not only neatly copied by Gourgas personally, but were attractively bound in a red leather volume and presented to Holbrook. This book has disappeared during the flight of years, a loss attributable to the indifference and neglect of later officials who were as apathetic as some predecessors. Albert Pike recognized the essence of the situation when he said; “The chief obstacles to her [Masonry’s] success are the apathy and faithlessness of her own children.” Albert Pike fully appreciated the fine work of Gourgas, and this is shown by his reproducing, in full all the correspondence that passed between Holbrook and Gourgas, one side of which he obtained by borrowing the Holbrook correspondence from the Northern Jurisdiction.

The correspondence of Gourgas with Holbrook reveals the man. In it we perceive the Continental background, and that he had absorbed the spirit of America. His basic traits of character are expressed not only in his utterance, but the very act of recording them on paper. The even and meticulous strokes of his pen are enlivened by the fires surging in his heart—yet nothing is done in a shoddy or hasty manner, everything reflects the workings of a well-trained and ordered mind. It was indeed fortunate for Scottish Rite Freemasonry that a man with his careful habits was in the Grand Secretariat from 1813 to 1832. It was he who gathered and preserved documents which became invaluable when those in Charleston disappeared; in no way minimizing the contributions made by the Founders of Charleston, and by those who succeeded them as years went on. Nevertheless, it cannot be gainsaid that Gourgas was as important to the Northern Jurisdiction as Albert Pike was to the Southern. The truth is that both the Southern and the Northern are eternally indebted to Gourgas for his zeal, his fidelity and his arduous labors during the early decades of the Scottish Rite in America..

It must not be believed for a moment however, that Gourgas stepped out of the picture when he resigned his office as Sovereign Grand Commander on August 24, 1851. Though he had attained the venerable age of 74, he continued an interest in the Scottish Rite until his death fourteen years later. Gourgas was the St. John the Baptist who proclaimed and preserved the Scottish Rite in the wilderness during the years of stress

and Masonic darkness. Thus, we close the book on Gourgas and look at the development of Scottish Rite in Columbus as Adoniram Lodge of Perfection.

Columbus enters the picture

Thus, entered a new Sovereign Grand Commander Giles Fonda Yates 33°, who had long served with Gourgas. Yates had been crowned a Sovereign Grand Inspector General in 1825 and admitted to membership in Charleston; but in 1828 he transferred his allegiance to the Northern Supreme Council and became an active member. Yates was a lawyer by profession, specializing in pension claims. He was constantly traveling and spent much time in Washington. Yet it was by means of these travels that he was able to contact Masonic leaders and brethren, and to begin work of propagation which Killian van Rensselaer carried on so effectively in the '50s. In fact, Rensselaer could well be termed the St. Paul of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, as he spread the Rite from Connecticut to the Mississippi during his missionary labors of 1848-1863. It is worthy of noting that Yates served for only a short period of time after Gourgas' resignation and Edward Asa Raymond was elected as Sovereign Grand Commander in 1851.

At the 1851 communication of the Supreme Council of Sovereign Grand Inspectors General of the 33° for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction that District Deputies were appointed to assist the Supreme Council in their arduous duties. As a Sovereign Grand Inspector General of the 33°, Rensselaer was appointed for the District of Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. Most interesting for members of Columbus is the fact that Ill. Brother Rensselaer reported that brethren of Columbus and Pittsburgh were duly qualified, and powers had been granted them by the Sovereign Grand Commander Raymond for opening a Grand Lodge of Perfection and a Grand Council of Princes of Jerusalem, in Columbus and Pittsburgh.

In the Supreme Council session in April 1852 Ill. Rensselaer reported that the brethren of Columbus "have evinced the most commendable zeal and enterprise in their labors. They have fitted up a hall solely and expressly for the use of a Lodge of Perfection and Council of Princes of Jerusalem and procured the appropriate clothing and furniture in all details. These facts, and the detail they manifest in not admitting any one, no matter of what rank or station in civil life, unless worthy, will do much to place Sublime Freemasonry on its proper footing in Ohio. They already have several applications for the Ineffable Degrees from different parts of the state."

Thus, was the beginning of what was to be known as Adoniram Grand Lodge of Perfection and Ohio Grand Council Princes of Jerusalem. This was the first entrance of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in Ohio. The occurrence of which was probably sometime late in 1851. Then on December 17, 1852 seven very well-known and sincere Masonic brethren traveled to Columbus to be initiated into Adoniram Grand Lodge of Perfection and the following day into Ohio Grand Council Princes of Jerusalem.

The conferral was no doubt by communication by Ill. Rensselaer, possibly assisted by Ill. William B. Hubbard, 33°. It is possible that some of the members of Columbus were in attendance and might have assisted in the work. However, there is no evidence that they had been active in degree conferral since they had been instituted, probably in late 1851.

Sovereign Grand Commander Raymond reported in 1854 to the Supreme Council that he had visited the brethren of Columbus and Cincinnati and having inspected their elegant and convenient halls and apartments took great pleasure in saying, that they have my cordial approval. The following report was filed at the annual meeting: Adoniram Lodge, at Columbus, Ohio, for the year ending March 1, 1854 and find that they have fifteen members upon their roll. Annual dues: \$5.00. The Council at Columbus, Ohio, has done no work the past year, having lost their hall. Annual dues: \$3.00.

Ill. Rensselaer, in his report to the Supreme Council stated the following in May 1854: "The Lodge of Perfection, and Grand Council of Princes of Jerusalem, at Columbus, have done but little work for the past season In consequence of the loss of their Masonic Hall, their beautiful Council Chamber and S.V. have been destroyed, and that beautiful place has become a heap of ruin--not by the element of fire, but by the hand of progress. I am in hopes, by their zeal, the lost time will be regained, and Columbus Grand Lodge of Perfection and Council of Princes of Jerusalem stand forth in all of their beauty."

It was later reported that "It appears that the building to which their rooms were situated was torn down or so greatly changed that they could not continue to occupy them, and then, as is too often the case, when they should have stood shoulder to shoulder the demon of discord came among them --and pursuing the history of the Columbus bodies of 1851-1854 further--it is our sad duty to end, by saying that they cease to exist and the brethren composing them disappeared from the rolls of Scottish Rite Masonry". Thus, ending any possibility of Columbus becoming the oldest continuing Scottish Rite body of Freemasonry in Ohio

Ordo ab Chao (Order from Chaos)

Many events of 1860-1867 led to more confusion and disruption within the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction under the leadership of Ill. Edward Asa Raymond 33°, who followed Yates as Sovereign Grand Commander. Raymond openly revealed the determined temperance and the iron hand which he had held in abeyance when in a subordinate capacity, though he had influenced affairs from behind the scenes in Boston during the late forties. Although the Rite prospered and spread during his regime, largely because of the efforts of Rensselaer, Raymond himself became arrogant and self-willed and at the annual session in May 1860 failed to appear for the opening session. Raymond was called upon at his home, whereupon he promised to attend the next day and preside. He failed to do so; the meeting was closed, and members departed for their homes. On July 31, 1860, he called a special meeting to be held in Boston on August 22nd, at which time he permitted the dispatch of routine business. On the next day, Thursday, he asserted his right as Grand Commander to close and open the Council at whatever time he pleased and declared the meeting adjourned until Friday morning at ten. Assembling that morning, the Council listened to the minutes of the day before and were startled to hear Raymond's declaration that the Council was closed. The Grand Commander and the Grand Treasurer General left the room abruptly.

The remaining six of those who were present at the meeting, stunned for the moment at the enormity of that which the Grand Commander had done, conferred among themselves as to the proper course for them to pursue. Realizing that much of the business that had been regularly

brought before the Council was unfinished; that there was yet a regular quorum for the transaction of business, they continued the session and Ill. Rensselaer was unanimously requested to preside. Upon being informed that past Sovereign Grand Commander Gourgas was residing in a neighboring town a committee, consisting of Ill. Rensselaer, and two other members were named to wait upon the Ill. Brother, tell him the facts and ask his advice as to how to proceed, Adjournment was then taken until Saturday morning,

They met at nine, Saturday morning, and the committee having interviewed Past Sovereign Grand Commander Gourgas reported that he had advised that the Inspectors would be justified in placing one of their number in the chair and proceeding with the regular business of the Council. Acting upon this wise counsel of the one man upon whose shoulders for nearly forty years had rested the destiny of this Supreme Council, whose mind had plotted the course and whose hand controlling the helm had saved it from the rocks at least three times before, they went to work with a determination that Gourgas worked, and that which they themselves have done, should not have been done in vain.

Raymond had seen fit to cross the Rubicon and they met the issue. The Supreme Council for the Northern Jurisdiction must live through the extremity, the task was theirs, and manfully they accepted.

Gourgas' own opinion was expressed in these words:

“I approve of your ejecting and deposing your Grand Commander, after his having treated you all in an unconstitutional, unamiable, and unbrotherly a manner, for which treatment no excuse can be given. Chance having invested in him a little power, he took upon himself to act the part of a petty tyrant, thereby exhibiting his ignorance and natural propensity. The only thing I cannot approve of in whatever is not conformable to the Grand Constitutions, which we have been obligated faithfully to obey. I am in hopes that as soon as you are properly righted, you will establish and follow the same rigidly, and nothing else.”

With the above-mentioned startling event, we have the last direct participation of Gourgas in the affairs of the Supreme Council. Yet his continued interest is shown by the greetings he sent in 1863 and 1864 to the Supreme Council sessions in Boston. Commander Rensselaer reported in 1864 he called upon Gourgas in New York enroute from Ohio to Boston and found him in feeble health, yet alive to the interests of the right. The venerable brother (now 87 years old) wished to be affectionately remembered to the Inspectors General.

To complete the story, the stunned brethren carried on under the leadership of Rensselaer. Raymond and his adherents joined hands with the Cerneau Supreme Council in 1863. This left two Scottish Rite Supreme Councils in the Northern field--the Hays-Raymond, which continued as a Cerneau body, and the Rensselaer, which continued as the organization created by De La Motta in 1813. The Hays-Raymond body went into decline; although it had an apparent growth of bodies that sprung up like mushrooms, for the organizers could not have been acquainted with the field in which it worked, and the bodies did not survive the union. The Hays-Raymond body was resuscitated in 1866 by some of the former Raymond Council members and by mutual consent of all the active members in the Hays-Raymond, the Rensselaer and the revived

Raymond Supreme Councils, a union of all elements took place in 1867, when the present Supreme Council of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction was born.

Rebirth in Columbus and more Chaos

One remembers that the beginning of Scottish Rite in Ohio really was in or around 1851 with the formation of Adoniram, Grand Lodge of Perfection and Ohio Grand Council Princes of Jerusalem. It was later reported in May of 1854 by Ill. Rensselear that, the Lodge of Perfection and Grand Council of Princes of Jerusalem, at Columbus, had done little work for the past season in consequence of the loss of their Masonic Hall, their beautiful Council Chamber and S.V. had been destroyed, and that the beautiful place had become a heap of ruin-not by the element of fire, but by the hand of progress. He was in hopes that their seal, the lost time would be regained, and they would once again stand forth in all their beauty.

It was later reported that "It appears that the building to which their rooms were situated was torn down or so greatly changed that they could not continue to occupy them, and then , as is too often the case, when they should have stood shoulder to shoulder the demon of discord came among them-and pursuing the history of the Columbus bodies of 1851-1854 further it is sad to say that they ceased to exist and the brethren composing them disappeared from the rolls of Scottish Rite Masonry" Thus ending any attempt that the Valley of Columbus had to become the first Valley in Ohio.

On Thursday, May 24, 1877 about twenty brethren of Scottish Rite of Cincinnati traveled to Columbus to inaugurate a Lodge of Perfection in the capital city. They found there an organization of about twenty-five brethren, and twenty-seven candidates duly elected and waiting for the degrees, from 4 to 14. The brethren had with most commendable enterprise and liberality fitted up and furnished an adorable suite of rooms; in addition to those heretofore occupied by the York Rite.

All being in readiness the work began with the impressive service of Secret and Perfect Master, at 2 o'clock P. M. on Friday, May 25th with twenty-one candidates being in attendance. The work was all performed by the officers of Gibulum Grand Lodge of Perfection of Cincinnati. The degrees of the Lodge, ending with the sublime and mysterious degree of Perfection, were all conferred by ten o'clock.

The Columbus brethren greeted the Cincinnati delegation with the most charming courtesy, and beautiful liberality, paying the bills of everyone at the hotel. Long life to "Enoch" which by the way is named after the anti-diluvian patriarch and not after Enoch T. Carson as one of the Columbus papers sagely reported: a rather severe joke on Bro. Enoch who by no means was an anti-diluvian!

When the Supreme Council session closed on the 28th of May 1884, few of its members suspected that there was a deep-laid, foul conspiracy formed to destroy Scottish Rite Masonry in Ohio, and none knew the extent of the treason that was skulking and hiding its disgusting features from the eyes of honest loyal Scottish Rite Masons. The session had been scarcely adjourned when the

conspiracy began to take form, and treason to develop itself in men whom few knew of or had suspected.

The Deputy, Illustrious Bro. E. T. Carson 33°, learning of the rumor that a scheme had been organized or organizing by some Masonic Scottish Rite traitors in Columbus, to seize the rooms in which the bodies there met, together with the money, property, paraphernalia, and if possible to carry one at least, and if possible the three bodies into a bogus, so called Scottish Rite organization, made two or three visits of investigation to Columbus and found the rumor only too true. The traitors and schemers feeling strong in numbers lost their presence of mind and coolness as necessary to successful conspiracy and treason, and began to assume airs of defiance, boldly declaring that they were, and would be sustained in their treason by the members of the different bodies. In order to test the matter and learn the new state of feeling prevailing among the members, Ill. Bro Carson directed a general meeting of all members of Enoch Lodge of Perfection, to be called for the evening of August 15, 1884. The meeting was very large, nearly all the members being present.

By agreement the T.P. Master opened the Lodge, the minutes of the previous meeting were read, some other local matters disposed of and then Mr. A. B. Robinson addressed the T.P. from the West, saying that he had a document which he wished to present and read. The T.P. granted him permission, and Mr. Robinson began to read a document addressed to Ill. Carson, Deputy for the State of Ohio.

The Deputy protested that this was not according to the understanding that had been arranged with the T.P. for the purpose of the meeting. This was certainly new business and the Deputy would assume the chair. After some hesitancy, the T.P. Master yielded to the Deputy.

Mr. Robinson insisted that it was pertinent to the Lodge business. Since Mr. Robinson's actions were in a courteous and becoming manner Deputy Carson permitted him to read the paper. There was one condition, that at the conclusion the Deputy would decide the relevance to the Lodge business. Mr. Robinson then read the following:

To Ill. Enoch T. Carson, 33°
Deputy for the State of Ohio

Greetings:

"We the undersigned members of Enoch Lodge of Perfection, Franklin Council Princes of Jerusalem. Columbus Chapter Rose Croix of the Valley of Columbus, and Ohio Consistory Valley of Cincinnati, (Columbus did not have a Consistory in 1884) do hereby most respectfully and unconditionally resign and withdraw fully and completely our connection with and membership in all the above named bodies, as well as our allegiance and fealty to the Supreme Council 33°, and last degree for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America over which Ill. Henry I. Palmer, 33° presides. This said resignation and withdrawal to take effect immediately." (Signed by 22 members, two of which withdrew their names).

Upon the conclusion of the reading of the document the Deputy requested that it be submitted to him for consideration. While reading the document the Deputy discovered that all the signers were retiring from the Lodge room. He further discovered quite a commotion in the West. Mr. Robinson was retiring. The Deputy said to Bro. Robinson you have presented a paper to me which I am reading and considering. I have

given you no answer to it, and yet I find you and your associate signers of this paper leaving, most of them have left, and without permission, too. This is not according to Masonic usage. You and your associates certainly should have remained to hear my reply to your communication. This paper is addressed to me and not to the Lodge. However, I will waive all Masonic ceremony and usage, and if you really wish to retire without my answer to this communication you can do so. I said to him that as Deputy I had no control over the membership of the Lodge, Council, Chapter or Consistory, any more than the Grand Master, Grand High Priest, or Grand Commander, has over the membership of their subordinate bodies—that if he and his associates wanted to sever their membership, they should apply to the bodies direct. Mr. Robinson was not open for argument, he had gone beyond that, and he retired. I then stated to the Lodge that this paper was addressed to me, but that inasmuch as the signers had seen proper to present it in the formal manner they had—in open Lodge, I would turn it over to the body and it might take such action as it thought proper in the premises. Then by resolution most of the names of the signers were by unanimous vote dropped from the roll of Enoch Lodge—and that ended their Scottish Rite Masonic lives—in Enoch Lodge.

At this meeting it was found that a part. of the rooms of the Rite, with much of the paraphernalia, dresses, furniture, etc., had been taken possession of by the conspirators. The rooms were locked up and the bodies themselves shut out of their own rooms and deprived of their own property. The janitor Mr. Edward West was called into the Lodge and questioned as to who had taken possession of the rooms, furniture, etc. He, proving contumacious, and declining to answer proper questions proposed to him in open Lodge, charges of unmasonic conduct were preferred against him, and prompt action taken by the Lodge, under the new disciplinary code, which fortunately had just been adopted by the Council of Deliberation, the provisions of which were well adapted to Mr. West's case of brassy audacity. He was expelled

The Deputy's Response

The remainder of the history of the problems in Columbus are best described in a letter from the Deputy to the Enoch Lodge of Perfection and an example of a most remarkable case of Masonic treachery. As you read this report keep in mind that Columbus did not have a Consistory at the time of this historic event.

Cincinnati, August 28, 1814,

To the officers and Brethren of Enoch Lodge of Perfection, of Columbus Ohio,

Dear Brethren,

You are aware that it was by my order and authority that the meeting of your Lodge was called on Friday evening, the 15th of August. It was my intention at that meeting to have given you a full statement of my reasons for calling of the meeting. You who were present upon that occasion, were witness to the fact that owing to the intense precipitancy with which some of the brethren rushed in with their address to me, and the confusion and exciting business arising there from, I had no opportunity to state to you why I had called you to meet me upon that occasion. In view of the very grave results which took place at that meeting, I deem it proper and my duty to explain to you briefly why it was that meeting was called by me. I think it necessary in order that the real facts in the matter of the troubles in your Lodge may be of record upon the minutes of the body.

For many weeks, nay for many months, before that meeting, I had reliable information that a formidable conspiracy had been organized or was organizing among some of the prominent

members of the different Scottish Rite bodies in Columbus to carry those bodies out of the Rite by (coup d'état), or at least to carry out many members. The malcontents alleging various real or imaginary grievances, some of them extending back over a series of years. I as the Deputy of the District, did all that I could to alloy the trouble. The first open demonstration was when the "Oath of Fealty" was required to be taken by the newly elected officers in 1884, at their installation. I gave an explanation and interpretation of the extent and meaning of that obligation. This however did not satisfy. The trouble, the plotting, and conspiracy went on. Correspondence was opened by the conspirators with a clandestine Scottish Rite by in the city of New York, as to the terms upon which they could have an irregular Consistory established in Columbus. Ohio. All these plottings, not in detail were known to me, but I did not deem it proper to take any action until the parties should be guilty of treason by some overt act.

I called upon one of the most active parties in the treasonable conspiracy in Columbus, told him what I had heard. He denied it most emphatically, and I knew when he was so denying that he was not telling the truth

A few weeks ago, the information came to me that a number of these conspirators, the leading members of the Rite in Columbus, the officers of the bodies had taken a lease of the rooms in which the bodies meet, in their own individual names. Within a few days after being advised of this, I learned the additional startling fact that one or more of the parties, who had rented the rooms over your heads, had made overtures to more than one of our members, to induce them to join them in their conspiracy, saying that they were going to establish Scottish Rite Masonry, under the Cerneau Supreme Council, that if they would join them they would get the 33rd degree certain. That the bodies were going to be established beyond question, that they had already secured the rooms!!!

When I heard this, I thought the time had come when it was my duty to act. I went to Columbus. I saw Bro. _____. He admitted that he had a lease in his own name for a part of your rooms (S.V.), he made some excuse for taking it in that way; said that it was feared that the Memphis Rite fellows, or some organization would get it. I asked him if he was willing to transfer the lease to the Trustees of the Lodge. He declined to do so; said he wanted to hold this as a protection to himself and said that so long as the Lodge did right it would not be disturbed. I asked him if he had joined the other parties in the lease they had from the agent Mr. Schultz the owner of the property. He denied this most emphatically, although I told him that I had heard that he was also one of the parties to that lease. He said he believed he was security for them but not a party to the lease.

Before calling Mr. _____. I had seen the original lease in the hands of Mr. Schultz, (agent for the owner), and had made a copy of it. It was signed by William A. Hersheiser, G.A. Frambes, Joseph F. Martin, James C. Kroesen. and Henry O'Kane. And yet one of these parties said to me in presence of a witness that he was not a party to the lease. I also called upon Mr. Hersheiser. He likewise refused to transfer the lease to the lodge or its Trustees, giving reasons for me not so doing very similar to those given by another party as already related. Said that the Lodge would never be disturbed in its occupancy so long as it did right!

I also found that two of the Lodge Trustees, Messrs. Hershisser and Frambes had placed a chattel mortgage on the personal property of the Lodge to Mr. Robinson, (the gentleman who presented the document to me in Enoch Lodge as above), to secure, (as was alleged), the payment of \$500. Finding matters in this condition I directed Mr. O’Kane, the T.P.G. Master to call the meeting for the Lodge on Friday, the 15th (August 1884) to meet me. It was my purpose to lay all—the foregoing matters before the brethren at the meeting. I had no opportunity, as Mr. Robinson and his associates precipitated the catastrophe before I had an opportunity to do so.

I can say however, that I went to Columbus to attend the meeting with no defined plan of operation. I wished to have harmony and peace if possible. It was not my design or wish to resort to extremities without it should become imperatively necessary to do so. Only an hour before the meeting when asked what plan I had, I replied “I have none, shall be governed by events as they develop”. Messrs. Robinson, O’Kane, Frambes, Hersheiser, and others, did it for themselves that night that which it would have taken many months to accomplish—deprived themselves by their own act, and your own prompt and cheerful co-operation of all their rights and privileges in Enoch Lodge, and forever excluded themselves from regular Scottish Rite Masonry.

The result that has come in Columbus was not unanticipated by me. For a long time I have seen the storm brewing. My conscience acquits me of having been guilty, of a single act or word towards any of the members who signed that document, presented and read to me in your presence on that memorable night, harsh or unfraternally, or that was not within the strict line of my official duty as the representative of the Supreme Council in Ohio. I did all that I could to satisfy the discontents; gave them every opportunity to retrace their steps, and at the very last appealed to them, (those who had secured the lease of the property) to transfer the lease to the Lodge. to pay off and cancel the chattel mortgage, all however without avail, they appeared to be madly determined to rush to their own destruction, or to destroy legitimate Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite Masonry in Columbus.

Their acts since that night only confirm all that was rumored or suspected as to their ultimate designs, and conspiracy against the peace and welfare of Enoch Lodge.

I am advised that the Hopkins, Thompson, Folger, Baker, Cerneau, S.C. has organized its irregular bodies in the City of Columbus. I am very sorry to hear this. I had hoped that sober second thoughts would prevail, and that there would be no Mason so rash and mad to throw himself away by joining this fraudulent masonic sham.

My dear brothers let me admonish you to be firm in your position and allegiance to the only legitimate Scottish Rite Masonry that can exist in Ohio.

I request you to have this communication entered upon your minutes to follow the record of the proceedings of the meeting of the 22nd.

I am respectfully and fraternally yours.
E.T. Carson, 33°,
Deputy for Ohio

Scioto Consistory Chartered

Pursuant to the call of the Ill. Commander-in-Chief of Ohio Consistory of Cincinnati published in the daily newspapers, the Princes assembled on the evening of September 11, 1884 in special rendezvous, when the Grand Chapter of Elected Knights Kadosch, was opened in due form, The Ills. Commander Enoch T. Carson 33°, presiding.

The Ill. Deputy took occasion to refer to the recent disturbance in the Valley of Columbus caused by the introduction and establishment of clandestine bodies under the Cerneau, Folger, Barker Supreme Council so called, by rebellious members of Ohio Consistory aided and abetted by a small following (17 names followed), whose names by reason of those rebellious acts, and scandalous and unmasonic conduct, had been dropped from the roll of membership of Enoch Grand Lodge of Perfection sitting in that Valley, and he recommended that Ohio Consistory take some official recognition of their conduct.

It was moved that summary proceedings be instituted against the transgressors. By roll called, the motion carried. Pending preparation of Charges, they were suspended from membership in Ohio Consistory. The Secretary was directed to notify each by Registered Mail and September 19, 1884 to make answers to the charges and specifications.

Following postponements, at a Special Rendezvous of Ohio Consistory, held October 2, 1884, the special order of the session was the trial of the accused and “thrice they were summoned, and each time did they and each of them fail to respond.” The accused were represented but the defense failed to offer any evidence in rebuttal.

Except for one continuance, the remaining accused were found guilty and thereupon they were each and all declared by the Ill. Commander-in Chief of Ohio Consistory to be expelled for unmasonic conduct from all rights and privileges and prerogatives of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and from membership in Ohio Consistory.

The Valley of Columbus records indicate that within a ten-year period, following the expulsion of the Cerneaus, several of those who had been dropped from the rolls recanted and petitioned for restoration to membership and were accepted. “Thus, ended the schism in the Valley of Columbus although the impact of the Cerneau activity on the Scottish Rite and Masonry in general lasted for a number of years after the critical period in the Columbus Scottish Rite Bodies.”

Evidently much of the healing had taken place prior to 1900 because the Valley of Columbus was granted a Charter for Scioto Consistory on September 20, 1900. Little is to be found on the granting of the Charter other than the comments of the Deputy. He had only words of commendation for the zeal and energy which the Brothers of the Valley of Columbus have entered upon their duties of conducting the affairs of the Consistory so wrote Brenton P. Babcock, 33°, Deputy for Ohio in his 1900 report to the Supreme Council.

Supreme Council Honors Columbus

I think it is of interest to find that Freemasonry has long had its struggles as far back as the Eighteenth century. It dates to the year 1717, the year of the organization of the premier Grand Lodge of the world—that of England—the hinge of the swing from Operative to Speculative Freemasonry, although the process covered many years. Within a few decades thereafter, the appeal of the spirit of our craft met with such a response that it found a place almost all over the

then settled and civilized world. Indeed, not many years went by before there began to be developed the so-called “Higher” Degrees the purpose of which was to illustrate and extend the teachings of Symbolic Freemasonry. More than 900 of such degrees are known to have existed during the Eighteenth Century. It was not until the Nineteenth Century, that thirty degrees were added to the three Symbolic Degrees.

We have learned that Scottish Rite was long known as an “Order out of Chaos” Just like the struggles Freemasonry experienced in the Eighteenth Century, Scottish Rite, too found its place in the civilized world. What a difference 15 years made in the Valley of Columbus. In 1885, still operating as an order out of chaos, the Scottish Rite brethren responded and brought forth many positive and constructive changes for the Valley. The most positive of which was the erection in 1899 of a Scottish Rite Temple for the Scottish Rite bodies at 34 N. 4th Street (later to be 32 N. 4th Street). The facility was constructed with the intent to accommodate the needs of several appendant bodies in addition to the Scottish Rite. The facility was dedicated in 1900, the year the Valley of Columbus became a four-body valley with the receipt of their charter for Scioto Consistory of which the Ill Brother John P. McCune became the first Commander in Chief and went on to become the Deputy for Ohio.

It was in 1938 after 125 years of Northern Scottish Rite Freemasonry that Columbus was selected as the Valley to host the annual meeting of the Supreme Council. This became known as the “Gourgass Memorial Year”. The Supreme Council itself celebrated the event by the erection and dedication of a monument to its founder, to which each subordinate body was urged, if it had not already done so, at some time before the close of A. D. 1938, to recall to the brethren the life and service of M. P. Brother Gourgass. The John James Joseph Gourgass Medal was created and is the highest honor that may be awarded by the Supreme Council. The first recipient of the Gourgass Medal was former President Harry S. Truman who was also a Past Grand Master of Masons in Missouri.

The Vesper service was held at the First Congregational Church on East Broad Street at 11:00 A.M. on Sunday morning September 25, 1938 with over eleven hundred worshipers in attendance. The eloquent sermon was delivered by Ill. Bro. Mellyar Hamilton Lichliter, 33°, a member of the Valley of Columbus and the Supreme Council.

On Monday September 26, 1938, Trustees of the Supreme Council (Incorporated) met at 10:00 A.M. in Parlor 216 of the Hotel Deshler Wallick for their first annual session with Sovereign Grand Commander Melvin M. Johnson, 33°, presiding. Ill. Bro. Roscoe B. Walcutt, 33°, of Columbus, extended a most eloquent and feeling welcome to all in attendance on behalf of Scioto Consistory S.P.R.S.

The entire annual meeting of the Supreme Council was under the direction of Ill. Bro. J. P. McCune, 33°, the first Commander in Chief of Scioto Consistory and the Deputy for Ohio. At the closure of the annual session Ill Bro. McCune thanked the Supreme Council for selecting Columbus to host the 125th annual session and hoped that another 125 years did not have to pass before Columbus would have the pleasure to host another annual session.

Personal Musings

History tells us that we should take a peak back at April 9, 1900 when the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, Ill. Bro. Henry L. Palmer 33° granted a dispensation to 149 Sublime Princes of the Royal Secret residing in and near Columbus to open a Consistory of S.P.R.S. to be known as "Central Ohio" Consistory. The name change to Scioto Consistory was made soon after and a charter was granted on September 20, 1900. The first class consisted of 110 candidates and their consistory degrees were conferred on June 8, 1900 while under dispensation.

In 1902 Frank Edward Lauterbach, one of the charter members of Scioto Consistory, established the musical program for the degrees and organized the male quartet which furnished all the music, with organ accompaniment, for the reunion and for many reunions thereafter. In the early years the quartet and choir members were not necessarily 32° Masons, undoubtedly due to the need to obtain singers from outside the small, new, but growing Columbus Valley of Scottish Rite. By 1907, however, all male choir singers were listed in the programs as 32° Masons.

In 1904, the musical program was already an important part of the conferring of degrees. A special separate musical program was printed listing the musical members for each degree, the soloists and a list of both men and women musicians performing in the degrees.

Beginning in this year a separate male chorus was used on the 17th degree to perform the stirring and always much enjoyed "March of the Ancients". This group was augmented with the quartet and lady singers to present the beautiful music for the 18th degree. For many years the degree work was closed after the 32° with the singing of the Doxology or with Auld Lang Syne.

The early history of the choir is a tribute to one man, Frank E. Lauterbach, who organized and directed the Scottish Rite Choir from 1902 to 1947. Another man who contributed greatly to the early organization and later growth of the choir was Bert Williams. Bert started in the choir by playing the organ, at the age of 24 as a candidate in the work in 1914. He also gave his time and talents for 45 years, the same length of time that Lauterbach served.

Bert served as musical director for Lowe's Theaters from 1927 until the mid-thirties. Many times, Bert would return from his out-of-town tours in the national theater circuit only to play or direct the music at the Scottish Rite reunions. Bert continued as organist from 1914 to 1941, and then became Assistant Choir Director until the death of Lauterbach in 1947. He directed the choir from 1948 through 1958. In the fall of 1945, Dale V. Gilliland entered the choir and in 1946 he became Assistant Director to Bert Williams. The Choir had grown in excellence since the early days and membership in it was much sought after by Masons who were singers. Upon the death of Bert Williams in 1958, Dale V. Gilliland was appointed the permanent Director.

The choir was very fortunate to have one as talented as Gilliland to continue the valuable work of the Scottish Rite Choir, with a B.A., M.A., and PhD in Music and taught for several years at the Ohio State University. His musical background was supported by organist Dr. Robert C. Grubbs, a very versatile man and conscientious musician who joined the choir in 1960.

During the period of the late fifties and early sixties the size of the choir remained constant. In the beginning, after the ladies were included, it was kept to approximately four in each part--soprano, contralto, tenor and base--but it gradually grew to as large as 44, 24 men and 20 ladies. The effectiveness and beautiful music rendered by the mixed chorus was always outstanding to both the candidates and members who repeatedly enjoyed the augmented choir in the 18th degree. This writer will long remember the Thursday night in November 1961, when he first heard the beautiful voices coming from the choir loft during the 18th degree.

It was determined by the Supreme Council that the mixed choir should be discontinued and in 1965 the Scioto Consistory was one of the last Valleys to discontinue the female voices. Many programs for family listening had been offered outside of the reunion performances by the choir, the earliest was in 1914. Concerts were given for special Scottish Rite Ohio Council of Deliberation meetings held in Columbus, and even the 1965 Grand Lodge session. Guess who was Grand Master in 1965? It was the Valley of Columbus Valley secretary Most Worshipful and Illustrious Edward L. Ott. One of the most memorable concerts was in its early history: The mixed choir was selected to sing at the Supreme Council annual meeting in Boston.

The years ahead for the Scottish Rite Valley of Columbus from 1940 until 1995 were to be filled with many great memories left behind within the walls of 32 N. 4th Street. This writer will attempt to share with you some of the memories left within those walls remembering always, "BUT FOR SCOTTISH RITE"

Ah, the memories

Over the years many mysteries have surrounded what went on behind the large steel doors that guarded the three entrances to the downtown Scottish Rite Temple, much of which was only known to the membership who met within the Temple. The steps of the front of the Temple served as a public place for people to assemble in the evening to catch the street cars and later buses stopping for those traveling north to Indianola Avenue, Clintonville and northward on their way home from work. The large blue sign reading "Masonic Temple" graced the front of the building and was the focal point for the bus stop.

The pre-depression and the period that followed took a great toll on Masonic membership unable to pay their dues. From 1930 membership in Scottish Rite in Ohio had only grown from 27,610 to 28,430 by the end of 1940. The growth during this decade was impacted by withdrawals and discharges brought about by the depression. Much to the surprise of this writer is that during the next five years, membership in Scottish Rite in Ohio grew by 20,234 members during the war years. The Valley of Columbus membership grew from 6,375 in 1940 to a membership of 9,172 by 1945.

This growth occurred even though during the war years travel was limited because of the rationing of gasoline and the lack of availability of rubber for tires. During this period the Deputy for the State of Ohio decided not to hold annual meetings of the Council of Deliberation for four years and thus the Council did not meet until June 20, 1946 in Columbus. From 1942 until 1948 the Valley of Columbus was growing by some 1,000 members a year and long held the distinction of being the largest Valley in Ohio capping out in 1947 at 11, 646 members. Then in 1948 the Valley

of Dayton, who had long been the second largest valley, surpassed Columbus by 140 members and held that honor until 1949, when the Valley of Columbus again regained the honor with 14,731. By 1958 the Valley of Columbus had a membership of 15,437 and finally peaked at 18,044 in 1961.

In 1958 the Valley of Columbus hosted the winter social event of the year with Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, appearing for performances on three successive nights. Each member of the Valley, in good standing, was given two unreserved seat tickets upon request. As this was a first experience in staging an event of this caliber, they had no idea of the popularity and audience response. Much to the delight the Veterans Memorial Auditorium seating 4,000 was filled each night. The approval was so universally expressed that this became one of the great social events of the future for the Valley. This writer long remembers these March events that became so popular one of the three nights was set aside for only Master Masons and their guests. We were fortunate to have our own Ill. John H. Pace (a realtor with King Thompson), followed by Ill. Bro. C. Neilson Griffith (a Farm Bureau Executive by vocation) and then Ill. Bro. James L. Foreman (an Executive with BancOhio), serving as Masters of Ceremony for these special events. These special shows continued until the late Eighties but diminished in interest like all things in life having served their life expectancy.

The Scottish Rite Temple had its unique attributes. A dining room, served by a full kitchen, providing great lunches for Ohio Bell employees, our neighbors across 4th Street, as well as other local downtown employees looking for a reasonable priced meal. Many thought the lunch room was a members-only facility. Oh yes there was the members table just inside the dining area, where you could find a group of Scottish Rite members solving the problems of the world over lunch. The front entrance and lobby area gave the appearance of an old fashion bank lobby, complete with teller station for dues payments. By the way, dues in the seventies were only eleven dollars, and if you had been one so fortunate to have become a member in the forties and early fifties a life membership was only one hundred dollars.

Hugh leather chairs and couches graced the lobby area that on occasion served as nesting places for many of the elder members to catch short naps either before or after a game of pool or during reunions. The lobby served as a meeting place for many members spending a day in downtown Columbus. About two floors above the lobby was a theater seating approximately 500 complete with a stage, choir loft and lighting so members could display their acting skills at reunion performances. Then one level down from the stage was the robe room directed by Thurman W. Garrett and barber chairs for makeup applied by cosmetician Alfred D. Maddox. Yes, the Scottish Rite Temple was filled with excitement and enthusiasm and doing well in the sixties and seventies. As Bob Hope would say, "Thanks for the memories".

The fraternity of choice

The forties, fifties and beginning of the sixties saw Scottish Rite as the fraternity of choice and pathway to the Shrine. Long did the traditionalists see a society of baby boomers, followed by the X and Y generations, with totally different concepts on long term commitments and loyalty. In addition to these issues no one had any idea that technology would outpace the fraternity's ability to adapt to such rapid change or the Shrine changing their membership requirements.

The fifties saw reunions starting on Wednesday and ending late Friday night both in April and in November. The reunions became the place to renew friendships in the dining room and then witnessing the degrees in the beautiful theater, complete with the stage lighting and sound system. This setting gave many members the opportunity to fulfill a desire to appearing on stage and play to a capacity audience. April and November were selected by the Valley of Columbus to hold reunions because it was surrounded by farm communities which, by choosing those two timeframes, made it more accessible to farmers to participate before the planting season and after the harvest. The planning and coordinating of reunions fell to Edgar L. Ott, valley secretary.

Just the preparation for a reunion alone was an experience to behold with rehearsal dinners and then the long trip up the stairs to rehearse on a stage. There at the controls of the lighting panel was David Peters with his instruction guide book on the specific lighting effects to apply during the degree work. Many of those taking part in the degree casts were amazed at how one rehearsal could produce such a quality deliverance for the classes. It was not uncommon for the valley to produce thirteen degrees in the three-day run at 32 N. 4th Street. I have been told that it took some 750 personnel to conduct a three-day reunion.

It was the behind-the-scenes members that made it happen. The rehearsals consisted of a stage walk through with directors such as John Pace, a natural for the part of Zerubbabel, or Tom Runyan and Ray Speer instructing one on how to do their parts. John never did the part of Zerubbabel the same way twice but could he ever direct. The ever popular 32° was directed by none other than Dr. George M. Jameson, Next, hanging mikes were added. One of the most difficult training exercises was to acquaint one on where to stand to be picked up by the mike. It was the challenge for William O. Cooper to handle the sound board and make us sound good.

The Friday night reunion was a special night for the class and the members in attendance. The main dining room was always filled, and many had to retire to the basement dining area for seating. There was always the tradition of dignitaries at the head table, and one usually found Senator John W. Bricker seated at the head table as the Active for Ohio with residence in Columbus, whom later in the evening would appear on stage as Prince Commander in the 32°. After dinner on Friday evening there was the traditional passing out of the cigars to all present by John Osley and his assistants.

For those taking part in the reunion cast it was a special day or night after eating, to retire to the dressing room in preparation for the degrees. The first person to greet you in the dressing room was Thurman Garrett who maintained the lock boxes for one to place their personal possessions. Then the next challenge was to find the appropriate costume for the part one was doing in the degree. Once that was located it was necessary to find a pair of sandals and skin tone stockings to wear. Sometimes it was necessary to find Thurman to find sandals that would fit. Once that task was completed it was makeup time. You knew you had arrived when you had the opportunity to sit in the barber chair and have Alfred Maddox as your cosmetician. After the preparation, the nerves began to settle in before going on stage. Interesting to note was how some found ways to relax before going on stage. It was not uncommon to see Chet Long (News Anchor for WBNS TV) stretched on a table reading a book or taking a nap while Don Hamilton (an attorney and Big Ten Football official) would be nervously pacing the floor rehearsing his part before climbing the long flight of stairs to the stage area. Even the most experienced became nervous before their stage

part. Jerry Rasor once said that one must become nervous in order to get the adrenalin flowing. The friendships that were developed within such a short period of time together were unbelievable. The fifties, sixties and seventies were great times for fraternalism, but fun quickly became work and brought forth many challenges within the walls of 32 N. 4th Street.

A hallmark year

To demonstrate how fraternalism was thriving during the seventies it is appropriate to visit a year and the activities that were taking place within the Valley of Columbus. The year was 1973. The Travelogue Program was fulfilling the winter needs of the membership by providing programs such as "Hunza Land" for two days in December, followed by "Austria" in January and concluding with "The Bahamas-From Top to Bottom" in February. The Spring Reunion degrees were conferred on 348 candidates, the largest class in several years. A large class was necessary since 280 Brethren had answered the call to that celestial Lodge above. Please note this loss was the largest ever in the Valley. The outlying counties were responsible for the large class as they provided 50.6% of the candidates. It was a rare occurrence when a half or more of the class came from outside of Franklin County.

The average age of the class was 44.5 which was somewhat above the average in the past. The records also revealed an unusual happening in that every one of the 24 counties outside of Franklin County furnished at least one candidate. The class was named "The James W. Phillips Class" in honor of the Thrice Potent Master of Enoch of Perfection. It is also interesting to note that the Valley showed a slight gain for the year with a total membership of 19,062 with 14th degree membership as of June 30, 1973.

A membership study disclosed some interesting information of our more than 19,700 members: 8,800 or 44.7% reside in Franklin County; 6,548, or 33.2% reside in the other 24 counties of the Valley; 1,885, or 9.5%, reside in other areas of Ohio and 2,473 or 12.6% reside outside of Ohio. Florida led the way with 922, followed by California, with 250. You may wonder how it was reported 19,062 of the 14th degree and ended with a total membership of 19,700. a few members on our roster were from Cambridge but had received their 32° in Columbus prior to Cambridge establishing a Consistory in 1956.

The theme for membership during these years was knowing the unforgettable impression the Scottish Rite can make on a Blue Lodge Mason. Our members should assist in "opening the door" to the summit of Masonic Light to all who are eligible. Membership was still growing in some valleys in Ohio and for the year Ohio had received over 1,000 new Scottish Rite Masons. Fees for becoming a member in the Valley of Columbus were \$100.00 and dues were \$11.00.

A report of a special committee to study the cost of a new facility revealed that a new Scottish Rite Temple, based upon the very minimum requirements, would cost well over \$9,000,000.00, exclusive of the cost of the ground. A well-known architectural firm made the study for the committee. This totally erased any possibility of building in the near future. The Temple is adequate and will be maintained. Brethren this was 1973 and there were concerns about maintaining the facility at 32 N. 4th Street.

Now fast forward a little more than a decade in the Valley of Columbus and look in on what happened. One of the subjects at the annual meeting was dues to be increased by five dollars. In addition to this reducing the tenure of the presiding officers of the four Bodies from three to two years was heavily debated and passed by a 3 to 1 margin. Even then time spent in the Scottish Rite lines was of great concern.

Brother Jim S. Deyo read the year-end Treasure's Report prepared by Ill. Gordon Y. Boyd 33°, in which a very modest operating gain of \$17,000 was reported on receipts of \$919,484 and expenses of \$902,384. "The main reason for showing a net income in 1984 was a general belt tightening" the report said. "Continued spending restraints will be exerted on expenditures, but we must be advised that there is a limit, or bottom, to expense cutting".

The report noted that only \$6,000 had been spent during 1984 on building maintenance and repair "We all know a building of this size, some of which is 75 years old, cannot be maintained for \$6,000". We must increase our revenue. A Long Planning Committee was formed to investigate where we were going, and how were going to get there, on three broad topics of broad interest: Membership, Finance and physical facilities.

In 1984 the Valley acquired a computer and a Computer Committer was appointed composed of Brothers John C. Minnis, Richard Baker, Co-Chairmen, Larry L. Holter and Brian L. Kelly.

Financial headwinds blow

By 1984 it was obvious that the headwinds about to attack the Valley of Columbus had only begun to blow. A modest operation gain of \$17,000 and \$6,000 spent on building maintenance on an aging building was a strong prediction of the future for the Valley at 32 N. 4th Street. As if the financial problems were not enough, cornices on older downtown buildings became a problem brought forth by the falling of a cornice from a building at Gay and High Street, severing the leg of City Councilman Ben Espy as he walked down Gay Street. One morning the Valley found bricks on the southern corner of the Scottish Rite Temple coming from the above cornice. Then came the Band-Aid approach of applying chicken wire to the cornice to prevent additional bricks from falling to the pavement below and reduce liability. At the same time the roof was leaking and causing damage to the interior walls. With declining membership and reduction in revenues, the question was what shall the Trustees do?

There were many options that were pursued and John Seilhamer, a member and architect with the Ohio State University, recommended renovation or construction of a new facility. In the meantime, discussion centered upon the demolition of the 32 N. 4th Street building and construction of a fifteen-story parking garage with the Scottish Rite facility located on the top floor. This would accommodate the parking needs of employees in the Borden building as well as Ohio Bell employees. After careful consideration this idea was determined to be costly and not to the advantage of Scottish Rite. Then came an offer from Columbus State Community College to take possession of our facility for access to our kitchen facility to meets the needs of their Culinary

School and in return we could continue to utilize the theater and maintain office space for fifteen years while we pursued relocating to a new location. That plan was also determined by the Trustees to not be in the best interest of our membership. An offer was then made by a local developer to do a property exchange with the Scottish Rite or build a facility for Scottish Rite at a location of their choice. Many times, the decisions of the Board were filled with emotions that drove away opportunities.

Finally, the Board reached an agreement with Aladdin Shrine to acquire seven acres of land on their Stelzer Road property in order that Scottish Rite could build a facility. There was only one contingency. Scottish Rite was to break ground within two years or forfeit all rights to the land purchase. I am sorry to report that after much deliberation and the strong support of some of our astute and successful downtown businessmen, all members of the Fraternity, the Board walked away from a sweetheart deal never to be offered again.

As a sidelight to this information there was an offer on the table with good faith money on deposit to purchase the facility at 32 N. 4th Street for purposes of future building opportunities. The only contingency in this proposal was Scottish Rite was required to pay for the removal of asbestos which would have been approximately \$500,000.00. The purchase price was such the Valley would still have received a nice sum of money after the asbestos removal.

The Board chose to walk away from all opportunities and proceed to renovate and reside at 32 N. 4th Street. Needless to say, the condition of the Valley building continued to deteriorate to a condition that outpaced the available money to support the renovation effort. It was not until the rear portion of the roof of the building fell in that the Valley learned a hard lesson: Never let one be driven by personal emotions to the point that prudence does not prevail.

The only option left was to place this ancient landmark on the corner of Gay and Fourth Streets on the market and being the process of relocation. This was not accomplished without embarrassment to the Masonic fraternity as the news media was not kind nor complementary to the future of the Masonic fraternity as a result of the sale. The real question to be answered was where do we go? What happens to 32 N. 4th Street? A once treasured landmark, now a large white elephant.

Time and change...

Therefore, the process began in 1995 putting the facility on the market and looking for a suitable location for valley office. The decade that had elapsed made the facility no longer attractive to investors and it was also learned that the facility had been considered to be a historic building. Once a site is historic it makes the site even less attractive, since it can only be of interest to those in preservation or restoration of historic sites. Even the City of Columbus downtown leadership became involved in the sale of the facility, forcing assurance that it would remain as a historic site. Finally, a 501 (c) 3 organization came forward and purchased the building for considerably less than had been offered during the past decade of indecision.

After considerable search, it was determined to relocate to 290 Cramer Creek Court in Dublin, Ohio. Even after the decision to establish an office for administrative functions and storage, there was the constant question, when are we going to have a building for identity? Identity of Scottish Rite Masonry is not within bricks and mortar.

The Valley of Columbus relocation action became the model for valleys charged with the responsibility of disposing of unnecessary real estate. On many occasions valleys within the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction traveled to Columbus to view the operation. Those charged with the transition had made the movement of our wardrobe so portable that the valley could move from place to place with limited effort. For some time, the valley used the Vern Riffe Theater for reunions but as even this became expensive, alternatives were sought. Today the valley is using many different sites for reunions for convenience to the membership.

In 1994 the Supreme Council for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction formed a new charity requiring the tutoring of children with Dyslexia. Ohio was approved to establish a Learning Center in each of its ten valleys. Cincinnati established the first Learning Center in Ohio. Columbus came on board in about 1998 establishing a center at 290 Cramer Creek Court. Today Columbus is one of only a limited few Learning Centers to have reached full support of its center from internal funding.

During the period from when we departed 32 N. 4th Street, we have learned much about change within Scottish Rite Freemasonry. We have learned that we can perform reunions at various locations within our jurisdiction. Now the Northern Jurisdiction has chosen to video degrees to enable valleys with casting problems to be able to confer degrees. Brethren, I guess I have been somewhat prejudice and bias about the Valley of Columbus and that it would never be necessary for our valley to use videos for the degrees. I must confess that it has happened sooner rather than later.

The future of Scottish Rite Freemasonry is placed in our hands to cultivate, nourish, and support. My greater concerns focus upon the fact that Apathy, Indifference, Complacency, and Self Gratification have become too common acts within our country and our fraternity. We are swimming in a sea of lethargy.

How long can we continue to turn our backs to generation after generation, with the most frequent excuse that they were not joiners? Are we so absorbed in the protection of our ancient landmarks and traditions that we use bureaucracy, control and administrative detail to destroy our real fraternal purpose we learned at the altar of Freemasonry? Questions have been raised at what point Freemasonry will no longer be relevant. The real question should be how can we become more relevant to good men seeking to improve their social universe?

“Arnold Toynbee concluded his monumental work on history with the statement that Civilizations survive only as long as they respond successfully to challenges”. Brethren we have many challenges ahead of us, and the time to meet them is now. Are we adequately prepared to meet them?

“Masonic labour is purely a labour of love. He who seeks to draw wages in gold or silver will be disappointed. The wages of a Mason are earned and paid in their dealings with one another. Sympathy begets sympathy, kindness begets kindness, helpfulness begets helpfulness, and these are the wages of a mason.” These were the words of R.W. Benjamin Franklin, Grand Master of Pennsylvania in 1766. I find nothing about one’s identity within a building with these last three paragraphs. The true Mason finds his identity within his heart. The real question you must ask yourself, have you truly dedicated yourself as a true member of the Scottish Rite Craft, or have you only been lukewarm, and a Scottish Rite Mason in name only. This is a personal question that you must let your conscience answer as you labor within the vineyards of the fraternity.