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Tracing-boards

Often confused, the trestle-board and the tracing-board are actually alike only in the similarity of their names.

In the Master Mason's degree we hear, "The three steps usually delineated upon the Master's Carpet, are, etc." "What is this Master's Carpet?" is often asked by the newly-raised freemason. He is in a good lodge if the Master of which can give him an intelligent answer!

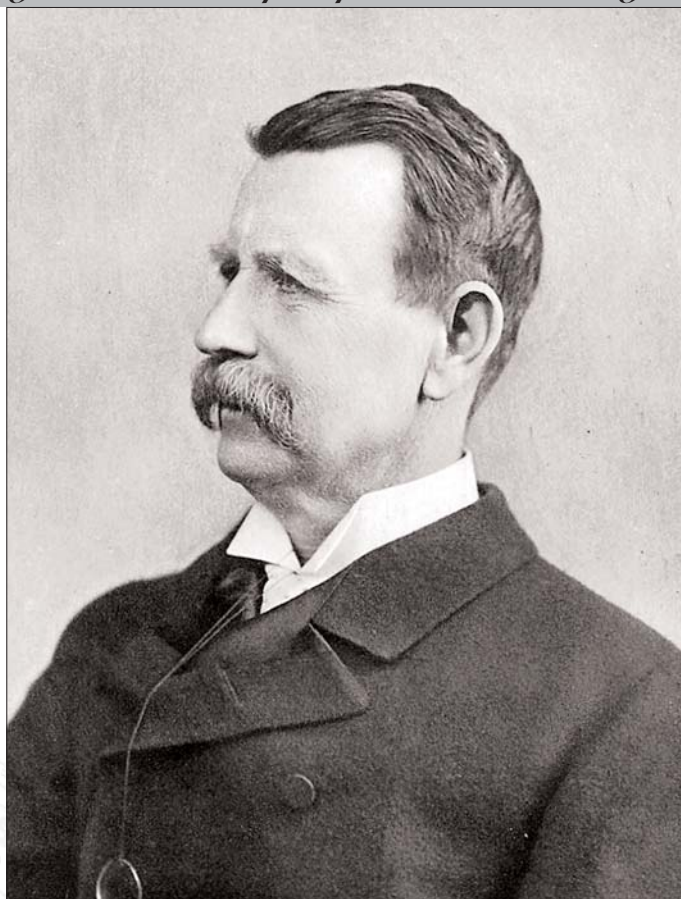
Among our movable jewels the trestle-board is mentioned and described last, and with elaboration, but the Entered Apprentice looks long, and often in vain, for a piece of furniture which bears any resemblance to the trestle-board shown on the screen, or pointed out on the chart by the Deacon's rod.

We learn that Hiram Abiff entered the Sanctum Sanctorum at high twelve to offer his devotions to Deity, and

to draw his designs upon the "trestle-board." On that day when he was found missing there was a holiday in the half-finished temple, because there were no designs on the trestle-board by which the workmen could proceed. But except in the ritual of the Entered Apprentice degree, no explanation is given in the lodge as to what a trestle-board may be.

Therefore it is somewhat confusing to find that the lodge notice of meetings is sometimes called a trestle-board and still more so when some masonic speaker refers to the Great Lights as "the trestle-board."

The tracing-board is a child on the Master's carpet, which is a descendant of operative designs drawn upon the ground, or on the floors of the buildings used by operative builders for meeting purposes, and during construction hours as what we would term an



Soldier, explorer and archæologist, as an agent of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1867, Sir Charles Warren (1840- 1927) surveyed Herod's Temple and conducted excavations in Jerusalem.

Sir Charles was London Metropolitan Police Commissioner for two years, resigning on 7 November 1888 on the same day, coincidentally but unrelated, that the body of Mary Jane (Anne) Kelly, the last Whitechapel murder victim ascribed to Jack the Ripper, was found.

Already a freemason for twenty-five years, in 1884 RW Bro. Warren was elected Founding Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, the premier lodge of masonic research. He later served as District Grand Master to the District Grand Lodge of the Eastern Archipelago.

architect's office.

Early operative builders' plans, drawn upon floor or earth, were erased and destroyed as soon as used. When lodges changed from operative to speculative, the custom of drawing designs upon the lodge floor was

continued; the "designs" for the speculative lodge, of course, were the emblems and symbols for the construction of the speculative temple of character.

From their position such plans became known as

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Tracing-boards

from page one

carpets. The Master's Carpet, of course was the design made upon the lodge room floor during the Master's degree.

Such carpets were drawn with chalk or charcoal. It was the duty of the youngest Entered Apprentice to erase this carpet after the meeting, using a mop and pail for the purpose. Doubtless this use of chalk and charcoal first suggested to our ritualistic fathers the availability of these materials as symbols. Incidentally, how did it "not" occur to some good brother of the olden days to make a symbol of that mop and pail!

Later it became evident that as no real masonic secrets were drawn on the carpet, the essentials of the institution were not disclosed by leaving them where the profane might see them. For convenience, the several symbols of the degrees were then painted on cloth and laid upon the floor; true carpets now. Still later these carpets were held erect on easels; in America the chart—in England the tracing-board—is still a commonplace of lodge furniture.

Old tracing-boards are already objects of interest to masonic antiquarians, and those early ones which follow almost exactly the illustrations in Jeremy Cross' *True Masonic Chart* (1820) are increasingly valuable as the years go by. Charts or tracing-boards have performed a most valuable service; together with the printed monitors or manuals, they have kept a reasonable uniformity in the exoteric part of American work, thus making for a unity which is sometimes difficult for the newly made freemason to discover when he compares the esoteric work of one jurisdiction with that of another.

The trestle-board is so entirely different from the tracing-board that it is difficult to understand how so earnest a

masonic student as the Rev. George Oliver confounded them. Such mistakes made the most prolific of masonic writers somewhat doubted as an authority.

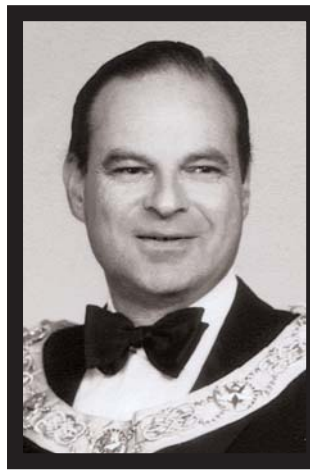
"Trestle" comes from an old Scotch word, "trest," meaning a supporting framework. Carpenters use trestles, or "saw horses," to support boards to be sawed or planed. A board across two trestles provided a natural and easy way to display plans. Hence the name trestle-board; a board supported by trestles, on which plans were shown or made.

Dr. Albert G. Mackey observes: "The trestle-board is at least two hundred years old; it is found in Pritchard's *Masonry Dissected*, earliest of the exposés of masonic ritual. Here it is called "trestle-board," but the object is the same, although the spelling of its name is different.

Symbols differ in relative importance according to the truths they conceal. If one disagrees with Mackey and considers the tracing-board a symbol, it is, at most, one of teaching and learning; the trestle-board, on the contrary, has a symbolic content comparable in Freemasonry to that of the flag of a nation.

From the meanest hut to the mightiest cathedral, never a building was not first an idea in some man's mind. Never a pile of masonry of any pretensions but first a series of drawings, designs, plans. From Mt. St. Albans, newest of the glorious cathedrals erected to the Most High, to Straßburg, Rheims, Canterbury, Cologne and Notre Dame, all were first drawn upon the trestle-board. Every bridge, every battleship, every engineering work, every dam, tunnel, monument, canal, tower erected by man must first be drawn upon paper with pencil and rule; with square and compasses.

The ancient builders erected cathedrals by following the designs upon the master's



RW Bro. H.A.D. Oliver

11 June 1921-14 January 2011

The Honourable Herbert Arnold Dimitri Oliver, QC came to Vancouver in 1952, becoming a leading trial and appellate counsel. A member of the National Council of the Canadian Bar Association, and for nine years a Governor of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, RW Bro. Oliver was appointed a Judge of the Vancouver County Court, and then a Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia from 1990 to 1996. From 1997-2007 he served as Conflict of Interest Commissioner for British Columbia. From 2007 he had served as ethics advisor to the Vancouver Police Board.

RW Bro. "Bert" Oliver was Initiated into Western Gate Lodge No. 48, in 1958, later serving as Worshipful Master for 1969-1970 and as District Deputy Grand Master of District 15 for 1973-1974. Serving on the Grand Lodge Committee on Constitutions from 1972 until 1999, he was chairman from 1990 to 1999. He also wrote the Trial Commission mandate and served as its first chairman for 1987-1988. RW Bro. Oliver Passed to the Grand Lodge Above on Friday, 14 January 2011.

trestle-board. Where he indicated stone, stone was laid. Where he drew a flying buttress, stone took wings. Where he showed a tower, a spire pointed to the vault. Where he indicated carvings, stone lace appeared.

Speculative freemasons build not of stone, but with

character. We erect not cathedrals, but the "house not made with hands." Our trestle-board, "spiritual, moral and masonic" as the ritual has it, is as important in character building as the plans and designs laid down by the master on the trestle-board by which the operative workman builds his temporal building.

The trestle-board of the speculative freemason, so we are told by the ritual, is to be found in "the great books of nature and revelation." Mackey considers that the Volume of Sacred Law as the real trestle-board of speculative Freemasonry. He says:

"The trestle-board is then the symbol of the natural and moral law. Like every other symbol of the order, it is universal and tolerant in its application; and while, as Christian freemasons, we cling with unflinching integrity to the explanation which makes the scriptures of both dispensations our trestle-board, we permit Jewish and Muslem brethren to content themselves with the books of the Old Testament or Koran. Masonry does not interfere with the peculiar form or development of any one's religious faith. All that it asks is that the interpretation of the symbol shall be in accordance to what each one supposes to be the revealed will of the creator. But so rigidly is it that the symbol shall be preserved and, in some rational way, interpreted, that it peremptorily excludes the atheist from its communion, because, believing in no supreme being—no divine architect—he must necessarily be without a spiritual trestle-board on which the designs of that being may be inscribed for his direction."

Modern scholars amplify Mackey's dictum rather than quarrel with it. The ritual speaks of the great books of nature and revelation, and by "revelation" the speculative freemason understands the Volume of Sacred Law. But the great book

of nature must not be forgotten when considering just what is and what is not the trestle-board of Freemasonry.

For nature is the source of all knowledge. Without the "The great Book of Nature" to read, man could not learn, no matter what his power of reasoning and insight might be. All science comes from observation of nature. In the last analysis, all knowledge is science, therefore all knowledge comes from observation of nature. This is true of the abstract as of the concrete. Philosophy, ethics, standards of conduct and the like, are not products of natural evolution, but created by men's minds. They are the flowers of natural philosophy. Few blossoms spring directly from the earth; the flowers grow upon the stalk which comes from the ground. Indirectly, all that is beautiful in orchid, rose and violet came from the earth in which the roots of the plant find sustenance. So flowers of the mind are traceable back to observations of nature; had there been no nature to contemplate, man could not have imagined a philosophy to account for it.

Therefore modern masonic scholarship thinks of the speculative trestle-board as "both" nature — and by inference, all knowledge, all philosophy, all wisdom and learning; wherever dispersed and however made available — and the Volume of Sacred Law, the "revelation" of the ritual.

All great symbols have more than one meaning. The trestle-board is a symbol with more than one meaning — aye, more meanings than "nature and revelation."

As each ancient builder had his own trestle-board, on which he drew the designs from which the workman produced in stone the dream in his mind, so each freemason has his own private trestle-board, on which he draws the design by which he erects his "house not made

with hands." He may draw it of any one of many designs — he may choose a spiritual Doric, Ionic or Corinthian. He may make his edifice beautiful, useful or merely ornamental. But draw "some" design he must, else he cannot build. And the freemason who builds not, what kind of a freemason is he?

Within the Master's reach in every lodge is some table, stand, pedestal or other structure on which he may lay his papers. Often this is considered the trestle-board because upon it the Master draws the design for the meeting. Any brother has a right to read into any symbol his own interpretation; for those to whom this conception is sufficient, it is good enough. But it seems rather a reduction of the great to the level of the little. A lighthouse is, indeed, a house with a light, but he who sees but the house and the light, but fails to visualize those lost ones who by it find their way; who cannot see the ships kept in safety by its ceaseless admonition that this way lies danger; who cannot behold it as a symbol as well as a structure, misses its beauty.

Those who see only the pedestal which supports the Master's plans as a speculative trestle-board miss the higher meaning of the symbol.

Lodge notices are not infrequently called trestle-boards, since on them the Master draws the design for the coming work, and sends them out to the craftsmen. This too, seems belittling of the symbol, unless the brethren are led to see that so denominating the monthly notice is but a play on words, and not a teaching.

A freemason's trestle-board, his own combination of what he may learn from man and nature, from the Volume of Sacred Law on the altar, and the designs in his own heart, is a great and pregnant symbol. It is worthy of many hours of pondering; a masonic teaching

to be loved and lived. Who makes of it less misses something that is beautiful in Freemasonry. ■

Excerpted from Short Talk Bulletin, July 1932.

QCCC

Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, London, the premier lodge of masonic research, annually publishes research presented in the lodge as well as other papers and notes submitted both by its full members and by researchers around the globe.

The annual publication, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, is available to any Master Mason in good standing who joins the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle.

Contact the local secretary, VW Bro. Jeremy M. Gomersall at gomersall@telus.net for information on becoming a member. ■

Reputation

Freemasonry is judged by what others hear and read about it, judged by the only example the public has: the actions of its members.

Potential candidates come to us because of actions which seem to prove that what is said about us is true.

Brethren, we have a reputation to maintain. The lessons of Freemasonry are clear—but it is only when they are put into practice that the value of Freemasonry can be made equally clear to the world at large. ■

Quatuor Coronati

Quatuor Coronati Lodge, No. 2076, under the United Grand Lodge of England, was founded in 1884 by nine brethren who were intent on using an evidence-based approach to the study of masonic history and research

Secrets of Freemasonry revealed!

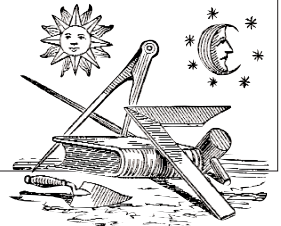
Plan now to attend the Grand Masonic Day in Vancouver on Saturday, 5 March 2011.

Contact :

VW Bro. John Keirstead

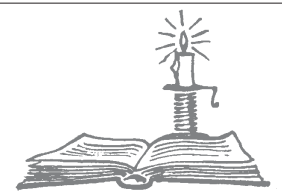
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into freemasonry.

This innovative approach was intended to replace the imaginative writings of earlier authors on the history of Freemasonry. This new style and approach was later to be referred to as the 'authentic school' of masonic research

The founders planned to develop an interest in research among brethren everywhere, to have papers read and discussed in lodge and published in its transactions: *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (AQC).

The lodge thus hoped to attract the attention and enlist the coöperation of masonic scholars in all parts of the world.

Membership is by invitation and is limited to forty. This past November our own Grand Historian, VW Bro. Trevor W. McKeown was elected to full membership, only the second Canadian to be so honoured. ■

Constitutions

The *Book of Constitutions* of this jurisdiction is the rule and guide of our Craft. Its value is such that the Grand Master is required—when making his official visits—to be preceded by a respected brother carrying a copy.

A pdf file of the current *Constitutions* is available on our Grand Lodge website to lodge secretaries, and any brother wishing a copy should ask his lodge secretary for one.

From the Constitutions

"The Board of General Purposes shall act in an advisory capacity to the Grand Master and to Grand Lodge and meets at the call of the Grand Master." [Sec. 68] It is not a decision-making body. ■

The legend

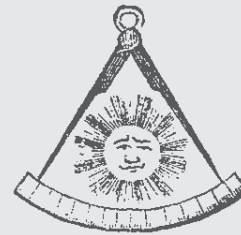
The Legend of the Quatuor Coronati is very interesting to freemasons because in the legend, as in the *Arundel Manuscript*—a transcript of the more important portions of

which follows—the Quatuor were originally four Craftsmen by name Claudius, Castorius, Simphorianus, and Nicostratus, "*mirificos in arte quadrataria*," which though it is translated the "art of carving," is literally "the stone-squarer's art," or the art of stone-squaring. They are distinctly called "*artifices*," artificers, although as the legend shows us, to the four artificers are joined four *milites*; whilst one Simplicius, converted to Christianity by the four during the progress of events narrated by the legend, is added to the stone-squarers, making nine in all. They are declared to be Christians, "*occulte*," secretly.

Diocletian ordered an image of Æsculapius to be made, and after a contest and dialogue with "*quinque Philosophi*" Simphorianus, who appears to be the leader and spokesman, adds Simplicius to the number—now five—and refuses, on their behalf and with their consent, to make the image. They are brought before Lampadius the Tribune, who after reference to Diocletian orders them to be stripped and beaten with scorpions, "*scorpi-onibus mactari*," and then, by Diocletian's order; they were placed in "*loculi plumbei*," leaden coffins, and cast into the Tiber.

A certain Nicodemus is said to have raised the coffins and taken them to his own house; *levavit* says the legend. Two years afterwards Diocletian ordered the soldiers to pay homage to a Statue of Æsculapius, but four "*Cornicularii*," or wing-leaders of the city militia, refused. They were ordered to be put to death in front of the image of Æsculapius by strokes of the Plumbata, "*ictu plumbatarum*," and their bodies cast into the streets to the dogs, where they lay five days.

The Arundel Legend is taken from a fine manuscript of the twelfth century, in the British Museum. There is another copy



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY MARCH 2011

3-4	Th-F	Annual Session	Order of Amaranth	Surrey
5	S	Grand Masonic Day	Masonic Centre	Vancouver
10	Th	District 13	Mount Lebanon 72	Vancouver
11	F	Centenary	Lewis 57	New Westminster
16	W	Districts 1 & 21	Vancouver & Quadra 2	Victoria
19	S	District 3	Kamloops 10	Kamloops
21	M	District 25	Aviation 173	Richmond
25	F	Annual Session	Job's Daughters	Kamloops
26	S	District 22	Comox 188	Courtenay
30	W	District 2	Lewis 57	New Westminster

of the legend in the Harleian Manuscript, and note is made of it in the Regius Manuscript, of the fourteenth century. ■

Excerpted from *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. i.

Conduct

No one likes to be lectured to, but sometimes it is necessary to remind ourselves that our goal is to create harmony within the lodge and to improve ourselves, spiritually, intellectually, morally; in all aspects of our lives.

The brother who raises his voice in anger in lodge, the brother who uses intemperate language or bawdy humour at the festive board, the brother whose scatological and blasphemous asides, or aggressive interjections divert and distract discussion—these brothers have not taken to heart our lessons of moral improvement and social harmony. Brethren, learn to control your passions! Please. ■

Promises

by Elbert Bede

Freemasonry exacts many pledges and promises *from* members, but what promise does it make to them?

None! Absolutely none!

Nowhere in the ritualistic ceremonies, so far as I recollect, did Freemasonry make any definite promise to me.

Nowhere, except possibly in the historical lectures and in the charges, so far as I have been able to discover, is it even hinted that petitioners will receive any of the things they expect of Freemasonry—the things you and I expected—the things you and I have led others to believe they might expect.

Many have received all they expected, and more, much more. We have found the pleasant companionship we expected. We have become associated with men with whom it is a pleasure to be associated. We have received moral instruction that has meant much to us. We have been led to higher and nobler attitudes. We have been benefited mentally and spiritually. We have developed new understandings that have given us many hours of pleasure.

Freemasonry as an institution promises its petitioners nothing; but if each of us, and each of those who follow us to the altar of Freemasonry, does his part to make Freemasonry what he expected it to be for himself, our fraternity will become for others all that we expected it to be. ■