

AMICUS ILLUMINISMI

THE SEMIANNUAL BULLETIN OF THE DEPARTMENT
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GREETINGS TO SESSION ATTENDEES FROM *AMICUS ILLUMINISMI*

MARK DREISONSTOK, 33°, MANAGING EDITOR, *AMICUS ILLUMINISMI*

A *micus Illumnismi*, the semiannual bulletin of the Department of History, Heritage, and Education at the House of the Temple, Washington, D.C., began as a library newsletter focused on books and periodicals lodged in the House of the Temple Library. Originally titled *Friends of the Library*, *Amicus* has undergone multiple format changes since its first appearance in April 1999. It is currently a digital publication with the *Scottish Rite Journal* serving as a print home for some of the general Masonic interest articles in *Amicus*.

In this special print edition, we present condensed readings of two *Amicus* articles that have been unpublished in the *Journal* but that give *Amicus* its special character and demonstrate this unique periodical's vital role as a Masonic periodical today.



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AN EARLY APPEARANCE OF A SCOTTISH RITE SPHINX

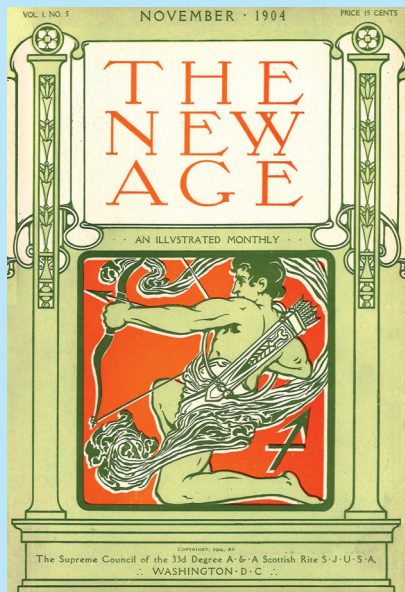
MARK DREISONSTOK, 33°, MANAGING EDITOR, *AMICUS ILLUMINISMI*

An essential ingredient of *Amicus Illuminismi* is its regular reflections on earlier articles published in the *Scottish Rite Journal* (known as *The New Age Magazine* from 1904 until 1989). During the *New Age's* first year, an intriguing poem called “The Sphinx” by Clarence H. Urner appeared. While not directly relating to Freemasonry at its printing, “The Sphinx” would soon become so—ten years later, the House of the Temple would install two monumental sphinxes to guard the entry of the current building. The open eyes of one of these sphinxes (pictured below) symbolize power and watchfulness, whereas the closed eyes of the other sphinx (pictured at the upper left of this page) represent the wisdom of introspection.

The poem, which appeared in the November 1904 issue, reads in part:

The solid Sphinx chafes not [as]
sweep the wingèd sands against his breast [...]
Frets not when winds, tired out, sink back to rest,
And silence mocks his visage, scarred with age
If not with grief which Time fails to assuage [...]
The weight of centuries, pregnant with renown,
Rests on his stalwart shoulders. What is Morn,
Hot Noon, black night, or any lengthening hour,
When Egypt lives within that steadfast frown?

The poem references with “morn, noon, and night” the Riddle of the Sphinx solved by King Oedipus of Ancient Thebes (“What walks on all fours in the morning, two legs at noon, and three at night?” “A man—as a baby in the morn of life crawling on all fours; as a man erect on two legs at the high meridian of life, and as an old man with two legs plus a cane as a third in the evening of life.”) While such classical allusions abound, this “Sphinx” poem nowhere directly mentions Freemasonry. Yet



The open-eyed sphinx of power and watchfulness, House of the Temple, Washington, D.C.

subtle Masonic themes emerge in the text for the introspective reader, notably the idea of the sands of time burying, laying waste, and destroying “many valuable monuments of antiquity on which the utmost exertions of human genius have been employed.” This symbol of *memento mori*, the thought of the eventuality of death and the eternity of time which lies before us (“the weight of centuries”), impels us not to despair, but rather to make most of this time on earth and on this plain of existence.

The 1904 “Sphinx” poem, with its Egyptian references, proved to be a harbinger of great things to come for Freemasonry and its architecture. When the poem was published in 1904, the existence of today’s House of the Temple at 1733 Sixteenth Street in Northwest Washington with its magnificent sphinxes was *years in the future*, as was the Egyptian-style Scottish Rite Temple of the District of Columbia farther up Sixteenth Street; “Egypt lives,” per the poem, in these magnificent Masonic edifices!

Remembering *The Builder* of Joseph Fort Newton

MADELINE BLOMBERG, HOUSE OF THE TEMPLE INTERN

A *micus Illuminismi* has recently explored early Masonic U.S. periodicals, including *The New York Masonic Outlook*, the *Masonic Home Journal*, and *The Builder*. The latter title was the Masonic periodical of Joseph Fort Newton, the prominent Protestant minister, philosopher, and author of such classics of the Craft as *The Builders* and *The Religion of Masonry*. *The Builder* declared itself “A Journal for the Masonic Student.”

The Builder, inspired by research lodges such as Quatuor Coronati Lodge of London, offered erudite presentations of Masonic symbols, beliefs, and leadership with an emphasis on long-form discussion.

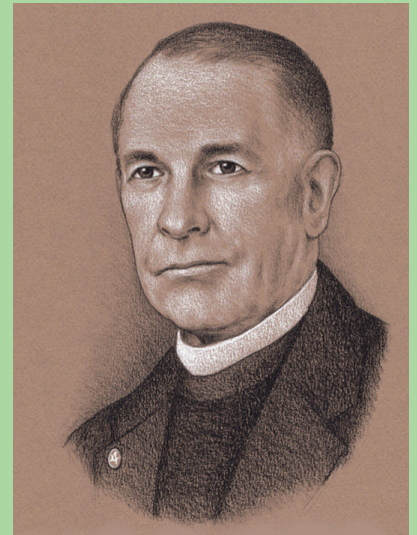
The Builder often favored series of themed articles, including “The Philosophy of Masonry” by prominent legal scholar Roscoe Pound, with each article spotlighting a notable Masonic philosopher throughout history, reflecting the structure and highlights of what would become Pound’s book months later entitled *Lectures on the Philosophy of Masonry*.

Another feature which appeared from time to time was *Ernst and Falk* (1778), a series of five Socratic-style dialogues (rarely seen in English translation) between a Mason and a non-Mason by German Freemason G.E. Lessing. Lessing postulated in this Age of Enlightenment work that Freemasonry is not necessarily defined solely as Lodge membership but also as a state of mind embracing a set of salient moral values.

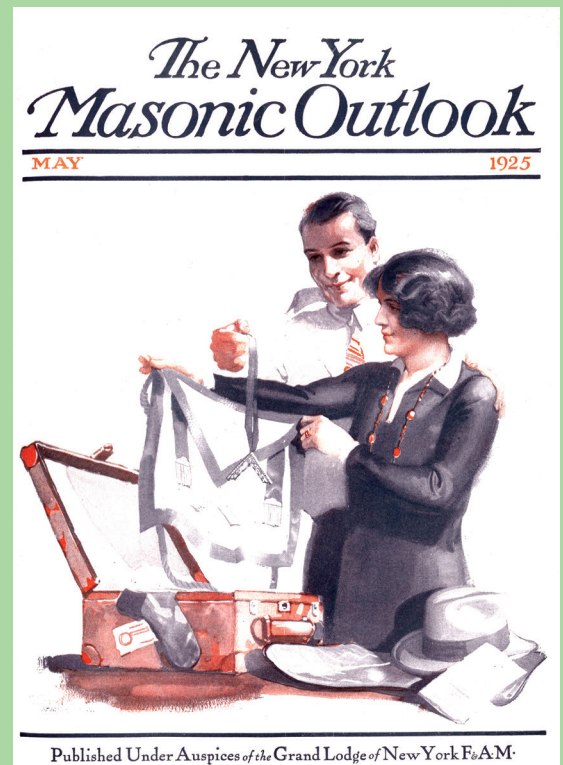
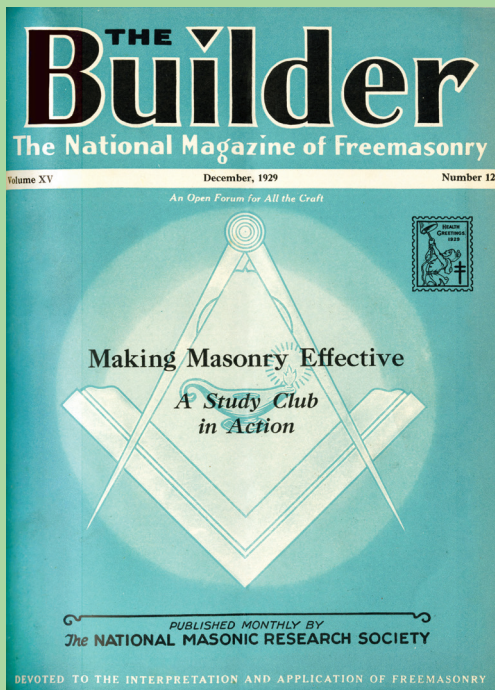
In an interesting moment for Br. Newton’s periodical, *The Builder*’s May 1930 issue opened with a posthumous article by Ill. Albert

Pike, 33°, entitled “Freemasonry in the Civil War.” Although it resembles the articles written by contemporary Masons published in *The Builder*, further inspection has revealed it to be a speech given by Pike at the Triennial Convocation of the General Grand Chapter in 1868, intended enthusiastically to unite both North and South after the U.S. Civil War.

The Builder ceased publication suddenly in May 1930, presumably due to the financial strain of the Great Depression. Though it had survived for a mere fifteen years, from 1915 through 1930, the breadth of research compiled in *The Builder*’s run of monthly issues is still used today as a valuable reference for many Masonic scholars.



The Rev. Joseph Fort Newton, illustrated by Travis Simpkins, 33°, *Chips from the Quarry*



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