

## Introduction to Proceedings Five of the Edward J. Wildblood Vermont Lodge of Research #110

Ten years ago the first publication of our Lodge began: “It is with tremendous pride that I write this introduction to the premier volume of the Transactions of the Vermont Lodge of Research No. 110. Its arrival marks the end of a long march that began with a meeting of interested brethren on a cold January night at the Masonic Temple in Rutland. The results of that first meeting have since blossomed into the first new lodge chartered by the Grand Lodge of Vermont in almost a century and into one of the most exciting Masonic events to occur in our State in decades.

I originally posed the possibility of a research lodge in Vermont during my District Meeting travels as Grand Historian in the fall of 1994. At that time, I observed that there was great interest among the Craft in learning more about Masonry's origins, symbolism and philosophy, objects to which a research lodge is peculiarly suited.

The idea of the Lodge remained fallow until the ascendancy of Grand Master Ed Wildblood who in the summer of 1997 formally challenged me to follow through on my promise to form such a lodge. During the District Meeting season of 1997, I and other members of the Masonic Education Committee traveled to a number of locations in the State posing the idea of the Lodge to the brethren. The mailing list generated from those meetings resulted in invitations to the organizational meeting of charter members of the Research Lodge in Rutland on January 21, 1998. At that time, a formal petition for dispensation to work was signed and subsequently submitted to Grand Lodge. After a second organization meeting at the Grand Lodge office in Barre on April 22, 1998 and granting of the requested dispensation, the Lodge held its first meeting at Granite Lodge No. 35 on September 8, 1998. At that time, four of the brethren being Robert Powlus, Walter McEnaney, Stuart Corso and myself, took the plunge and presented their papers to the Lodge. The spirited discussion that followed each of the four papers confirmed all of our suspicions regarding the need for a group such as the Research Lodge.

Subsequent meetings proved equally as auspicious and after drafting suitable bylaws and filing the required petition, I was honored to receive the charter of the Lodge, together with a setting maul-type gavel carved from cherry wood, from Grand Master Wildblood at the annual Grand Lodge session in Burlington on June 9, 1999.

At the present time, the Lodge has 42 members and correspondents hailing from all corners of the State. We do not hold ourselves out as academics, professional writers or historians. Rather, we endeavor to create an environment where ordinary Masons can learn and grow in Masonic knowledge while still having a smashing good time. For this reason, we have limited our meetings to three a year with each meeting except for the annual communication in Rutland (a convenience which I selfishly granted myself as part of forming the Lodge) being held in a different lodge within the State. Out of respect for a tradition that was prevalent in agrarian 19<sup>th</sup> century Vermont, we formed the lodge as a "Moon Lodge." We thus follow the tradition of our brethren in former times who used the Moon as both a symbolic and literal “light” during their travels to and from lodge.”

With these words the first Worshipful Master of our Lodge, James Goss, Esq., introduced the first “Transactions” of our Lodge in April 2000. As such, they form the best introduction to these Proceedings also. A decade has passed since Worshipful brother Jim wrote these words, and they have been ten busy

years of growth and development of our Research Lodge.

In the first years, many of the active Masons of our State jumped to be a part of the trendy new Lodge which was at that time the newest initiative of our Grand Lodge. This initial momentum sustained itself for several years, and then as the newness of the endeavor faded many brothers found other things to capture their interest and the Lodge was left with a handful of core members to answer the question of how best to develop the Lodge and make it grow.

During the autumn District meetings of 2000 I had listened to the second Master of our Lodge, Robert Powlus, speaking at these meetings and accepted a petition from him. I attended my first meeting in Rutland in April 2001. I recall that in those days we seldom had more than one speaker, although the meetings were well attended. Of discussion there was little. Various efforts were made to increase the activity of the lodge. We toyed with the idea of working with a film maker in producing a documentary on Vermont Freemasonry, but the idea was never developed.

Through this period many excellent papers were contributed, papers that were real research papers of a very high order. This reflected the scholarly skill of the founding members. Three contributors stand out: Edward Wildblood, PGM; James Goss; and Steven Farrington. Their works were published in hard paper editions of the Lodge Transactions with no remaining electronic files existing. These were very basic printing jobs because of the high cost of printing, and they were distributed only to members of the Lodge. Please don't get me wrong- many members contributed material of high quality, and I mean no denigration of their work. But to me personally, these three I have mentioned stand out in the early years.

In June 2004, at its annual communication, the Grand Lodge of Vermont voted to accept the petition of the VT Research Lodge to be renamed after the Grand Master who had founded it, and who had been its guiding inspiration in its early years. It was therefore renamed "The Edward J. Wildblood, Jr. Lodge of Research of Vermont No. 110, F.A.M." The Lodge was rededicated at a public meeting held at Bristol in Libanus #47 under W. Master James Selleck. This was a very large meeting. His widow, Elma Wildblood, was escorted to the East and presented with the new charter of the Lodge. Cedric Smith presented the new charter in a beautiful wooden frame which now hangs in Rutland at the Masonic Temple.

At the Annual meeting in April, 2005, Eric Ginette proposed the Lodge create a website, and introduced a brother, Mason Pratt, who volunteered to do this. These brothers had already begun work on the proposed site, soon to be called [vermontlodgeofresearch.com](http://vermontlodgeofresearch.com). At this same meeting, brother Ginette also suggested that our bylaws be changed to define "full members" as brothers who had actually submitted and had work published by the Lodge, and in return were not charged dues. A committee was appointed, and extensive work was begun to redesign these bylaws.

The Annual meeting of 2006 voted to retain officer positions for a term of two years, as finding brothers willing to serve as officers was becoming difficult. The new web site was officially up and running, and the motion was made (and defeated) to allow publishing of Lodge submissions on this site. It was also noted that the Transactions of the Lodge had not been published since WM James Selleck's 2005 edition, but no action was taken.

I became W. Master of the Lodge in April 2007. We began the practice of setting up a table about our Lodge at the annual meeting of Grand Lodge, and this began a rise in petitions to our Lodge. We also began to publish articles about the Lodge in the State paper, the "Green Mountain Freemason." At this time a competition for the Symbolic Lodges to present a "best research paper" was begun, with prizes to

be awarded at the Grand Lodge annual meeting. Of particular note this year was the chance discovery by one of our members, brother Stephen Cosgrove, of the 32° certificate of Phineas Ballou, the founder of Scottish Rite Masonry in Vermont. It was also at this time that the logo of our Lodge was produced from a rough design to its finished form by Kevin Newton.

Finally, at the annual meeting in Rutland on April 22, 2008, the much discussed new bylaws were adopted. At this meeting also it was decided that three meetings a year were too few to “keep the ball rolling” and it was voted to insert two traditional “festive boards” into our yearly schedule on the feast days of St. Johns, June 24<sup>th</sup> and December 27<sup>th</sup>. The first of these was actually held the previous December in Montpelier, during a blizzard.

It was during these years also that a start was made in publishing a Trestleboard or newsletter for the Lodge. These are included in these Proceedings. The membership passed 80 members for the first time. Also of importance was the vote at this time to allow papers of our members to be published on the web site, with the approval of the author.

My term in the East was followed by brother Mason Pratt in April 2009, and I became the second secretary of the Lodge at that time succeeding brother Richard Hildebrand who had been one of the founding members. During this period I began the labor of assembling the papers and other work of our Lodge for the five years since volume 4 of the Transactions was printed. I obtained the permission of the Lodge to switch from hard paper printing to an electronic format to both save costs and also hopefully to permit more timely publications of our brother’s labors.

This volume, which I am calling Proceedings Five, being the fifth volume published, covers the years 2005 to 2009. I have no illusions that it is without errors, for which I apologize. The format, however, is such that corrections can be made and material added in the future. I hope that my labors meet with the approbation of my Lodge, and serve for the furtherance of our noble Craft.

Eric Ginette, sec’ry  
December, 2010