
The Lyceum

HAPPY HALLOWEEN



A Publication of
The Committee on Masonic Education



Bikes for Books



Read and Ride

The "Bikes for Books" program allows IMCAP to work with our Illinois Masonic Lodges to promote academic success through a positive recognition reading program. The program is simple, each time a child reads a book, their name will go into a drawing towards winning a bike.

How it Works:

The Lodge works with the School in offering "Bikes for Books" reading program. IMCAP will provide all the needed program materials and reimburse the Lodge for the bike(s) purchased. The Lodge will purchase the bike and the safety

Program Requirements:

- Schools located in Illinois can participate including public, parochial, and private.
- The Program can be offered to Pre-K through 5th grade classes.
- It is recommended the "Bikes for Books" Program to be ran from January through March.
- Only Illinois Masonic Lodges can apply for the "Bikes for Books" Program.
- Lodge's can offer the reading program in one or more schools.
- IMCAP will reimburse a lodge up to \$350 for the purchase of 1 bike for one school and up to \$500 for bikes for 2 or more schools.
- Lodges will be responsible for purchasing a bike(s) to meet the child's height, weight, and ability.
- Lodge must purchase a quality pre-assembled new bike(s) and a helmet(s) for the child/children winning the bike drawing.
- Lodge is responsible for the cost of the helmet.

Getting Started: Masonic Lodge Application Steps

- Lodge must meet with school staff to discuss the "Bikes for Books" program requirements and roles.
- Lodge must obtain official notification of agreement to participate from the school.
- Lodge will work with the school staff to determine the grade levels that will participate in the program.
- Lodge will work with school staff to determine the timeframe of the program.
- Lodge must work with school staff to complete the "Bikes for Books" application (below).
- Lodge must submit the completed application to IMCAP by email, fax, or mail.
- Lodge representative can pick up the kits at the IMCAP table at Grand Lodge Annual Communication.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING FILLABLE PDF FORM:

Before completing the document, save the form (PDF format) to a location on your computer or phone (for example: Desktop or Documents) **You must save the file to your computer or phone first and then fill it out. Do not complete the form in your web browser or your data will NOT be saved.**

- Click on "Bikes for Books" Online Fillable button below. This will open the form in your web browser.
- Right click on form, select "Save As".
- Save the form to a location on your computer or phone.
- Open the saved form.
- After you have filled out the form, save this completed form to your computer or phone.
- Send the COMPLETED form to imcap@ilmason.org.



ILLINOIS MASONIC CHILDREN'S ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Leading Children and Young Adults to a Brighter Future!

BIKES for BOOKS LODGE-BASED PROGRAM APPLICATION

Lodge Information:

- Name of Lodge:
- Contact Person:
- Email:
- Phone:

Grade School Participation Information:

- Name of School:
- Contact Person:
- Email:
- Phone:

Complete the following questions about your Application:

1. Grades participating in the Bikes for Books Reading Program?
2. Number of children enrolled in the classes participating?
3. Dates the Reading Program be offered at the school?
4. Has the lodge provided monetary or volunteer assistance to the school?
5. Is this application for Program materials only because your lodge has already submitted an application that funds the purchase of one bike for up to \$350? Yes No

Comments:

Signature of Lodge Secretary:

Date

Signature of Worshipful Master:

Date



IMCAP | AN ILLINOIS FREEMASONRY CHARITY

imcap.org | 2866 Via Verde, Springfield, IL 62703 | Phone: 217 529-8900 ext. 222 | imcap@ilmason.org

Lodge's Role

- Deliver the "Bikes for Books" program and marketing materials to the school(s) supplied by IMCAP.
- Review the "Bikes for Books" Success ticket system detailed in the Bikes for Books Lodge Guide with school representative(s).
- Follow up with school representative(s) about the date of the bike drawing scheduled.
- Attend the drawing at the school(s) and award the certificate for the bike and helmet.
- After the drawing ask the school how many children participate in the program and the number of books read.
- Communicate with the parent/guardian about the bike(s) needed including the child's height and inseam, helmet size, and special needs (training wheels).
- If the parent does not wish for the child to receive a bike, IMCAP will provide an alternative reading-based award.
- Contact IMCAP when the Reading Program ends with the # of books read and # of children that participated.
- Purchase a quality pre-assembled new bike(s) and helmet(s) for the child/children. Do not buy a used bike or assemble a new bike.
- Send the bike receipt(s) to IMCAP for reimbursement.
- Coordinate with school representative(s) about presenting the bike and helmet to the winning child/children.



School's Bikes for Books Role:

- Confirm interest in participating in Program with Lodge.
- Use "Bike for Books" program and promotional materials provided by IMCAP.
- Handle registration for students to participate.
- Manage the "Bikes for Books" tickets for bike drawing
- Give a "Success Sticker" each time child earns a ticket.
- Maintain the ticket container in a safe location.
- Inform the Lodge about the date of the bike drawing.
- Invite Lodge representatives to attend the drawing at the school to award the certificate for the bike and helmet.
- Allow the Lodge representatives to present bike to the winner during class or special event.
- Inform Lodge about the # of books read and # of children that participated in the Reading Program.



IMCAP's "Bikes for Books" Role:

- Prepare a program and promotional material box tailored to the school(s) to send to designated Lodge members. The packet will include templates for flyers, posters, reading tickets, stickers, registration forms, and press releases.
- Reimburse the Lodge for the purchase of the quality bike(s) based on child needs.
- If the parent does not wish for the child to receive a bike, IMCAP will provide an alternate reading-based award.

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www.ilmason.org/masonic-education



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Editor, Chad Lacek, 33°, Bernard Davis, Chairman

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Dear Brethren and Readers,

Greetings from the Editorial Desk of the Grand Lodge of Illinois Masonic Education Committee's The Lyceum!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As the vibrant hues of autumn blanket our beautiful state, it is my pleasure to introduce the October 2024 edition of The Lyceum, our Masonic Education Magazine, brought to you by the Grand Lodge of Illinois Masonic Education Committee. As we usher in the crisp coolness of fall, this issue is packed with a blend of intriguing narratives and enlightening articles that promise to both educate and entertain.

This month, we delve deep into the world of Edgar Allan Poe, exploring the intricate tapestry of own Masonic Degree!

Our journey then takes a spine-tingling turn as we explore the enigmatic realm of ghost hunting. This article embarks on a fascinating exploration of how the unseen and mysterious invade our sacred spaces--even Masonic Lodges! Be prepared for an encounter of the historical and supernatural kind!

And as the night stretches longer, what better time than now to delve into the vampire lore with an original piece on Dracula--the Famous Undead Freemason?!

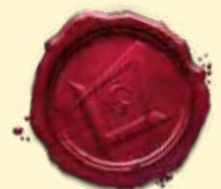
As we transition into a season of gratitude and festivity, let us carry the spirit of exploration and brotherhood forward. May your gatherings be filled with warmth, laughter, and perhaps a touch of mystery!

In the spirit of celebration, camaraderie, and the joy of discovery, I extend my heartfelt wishes to you all for a delightful holiday season. May the wisdom of Houdini's escapism inspire us to break free from the mundane, embracing the wondrous and the unknown in our quest for knowledge.

Fraternally yours,
R.H. Johnson,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.H. Johnson', written over a horizontal line.

Editor-In-Chief
The Lyceum



From the Chairman's Desk

by WB:. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman- Masonic Education Committee



Happy Halloween from your Education Committee!

As we celebrate this spooky season, let's take a moment to reflect on the importance of education in our lives. Just like a good horror story, a lack of knowledge can be scary. But with education, we can shed light on the darkness and illuminate our path forward. This month, we encourage you to explore the many educational resources available to you.

Whether it's attending a workshop, taking an online course, or simply reading a good book, there are countless ways to expand your knowledge and skills.

Remember, education is not just about memorizing facts and figures. It's about developing critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and the ability to adapt to change. These are the qualities that will help us overcome any challenge, no matter how frightening it may seem.

So this Halloween, let's make a commitment to lifelong learning. Let's embrace the unknown and face our fears with knowledge and understanding.

Happy Halloween and Happy Learning!

Fraternally,

WB Bernard Davis Jr,

Bernard Davis Jr

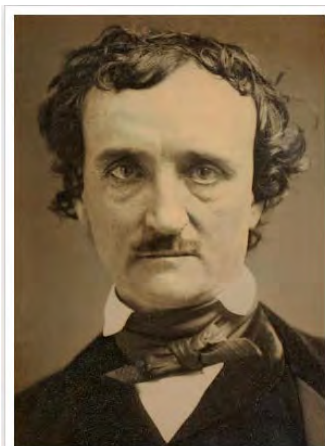
Chairman - Committee on Masonic Education

Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. M. of the State of Illinois



Edgar Allan Poe's Perverse Masonic Degree: The Cask of Amontillado

*by WB Darin A. Lahners
Committee on Masonic Education*



In Edgar Allan Poe's Short story, "The Cask of Amontillado", published in 1846, revenge is the motive for a gruesome murder that takes place in an underground vault. There is no evidence that Poe was a Freemason. Many authors have gone out of their way to argue that the short story is an anti-Masonic work and that Poe had publicly mocked the Freemasons, especially in his essay: "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfall" prior to his writing of: "The Cask of Amontillado". Compiling to this is an idea that Edgar's strained relationship with his wealthy foster Father, John Allan, was a Freemason, and this led Poe to cast him in the role of Fortunado. I find it difficult to fathom that Poe would have held onto a grudge 13 years after his Foster father's death.

In a column by E.J. Edwards in the "Washington (D.C.) Herald", published on December 2, 1913, entitled "Capt. Wagner's Recollections of Edgar Allan Poe", There is an odd recollection given by Capt. Fredrick C. Wagner. Capt. Wagner had an association with Sarah Helen Whitman, Poe's one-time fiance' whom Poe had met in 1845, so this would have been the earliest time when he may have met him. Wagner was also apparently a Freemason, although I could not confirm this.

"I presume that very few persons are now living who ever saw, certainly very few who ever talked with, Edgar A. Poe." said Capt. Frederick C. Wagner to me. "In his day he was a very prominent citizen of New York and was well known to the Masonic fraternity of the United States by his prominent identification with the establishment of the great Masonic home at Utica, N.Y. I am fortunate enough to be able to recall many meetings of Poe and several interesting conversations which I had with him at one time or another," he went on.

If Poe was anti-Masonic, why would he support the building of the Masonic home in Utica, New York? Perhaps Capt. Wagner was confused, as he states: "My recollections of Edgar Allen [sic] Poe are among the most pleasant of any of those of my young manhood in New York City." I find it difficult to believe that Poe would have been able to give financially to the Masonic Home building fund. However, I do think that Poe not have had issues with individual Freemasons, but with the institution itself. In any case, there is enough evidence presented in: "The Cask of Amontillado" to state that Poe was familiar with Freemasonry.

Many authors also state that Poe and others of that time would have had an idea of Freemasonry and its workings due to the Morgan Affair in 1826, however, I believe that Poe had knowledge of some of the higher degrees of Freemasonry, either through the various exposes that came forward at his time or through associations with Freemasons like Wagner.

An argument can and has been made for what occurs to the characters in "The Cask of Amontillado" as being a reenactment of a Masonic Degree, however, I want to postulate something different. It is my argument that if you view the masonic elements in reverse, they reenact the second section of the Fellowcraft degree. First, let's discuss the story and the Masonic elements contained therein.

The story begins with the protagonist, Montresor, confessing his dark deed to some unknown person. He regales the story of how he has suffered a thousand insults at the hand of his nemesis, Fortunato. He says that Fortunato has one weakness, which is that he is a connoisseur of wine. Montresor encounters his nemesis at Carnevale and informs him that he has a pipe (a measurement of cask sizes) of Amontillado in his possession, but he doubts it. Montresor, quite cleverly, states that he can engage another expert, Luchesi, to look at the cask, as he does not want to occupy Fortunato's time. Using Fortunato's ego against him, because Fortunato doubts Luchesi's ability to correctly identify the wine, Montresor is able to convince Fortunato to look at this cask.

Montresor continues to try to persuade Fortunato to not come with him, telling him about the dampness of his vaults, and worrying about Fortunato's coughing, but nothing dissuades him from his mission. They continue into the vaults after grabbing two torches and descending a long winding staircase. Once in the vaults of the Montresor palazzo, Montresor plies Fortunato with alcohol, first a bottle of Medoc, followed by a flask of De Grave. At this point, Poe gives the following description:

"I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand. I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one. "You do not comprehend?" he said. "Not I," I replied. "Then you are not of the brotherhood." "How?" "You are not of the masons." "Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes." "You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied. "A sign," he said, "a sign." "It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my roquelaire. "You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado." "Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame."

At this point, they arrive at the Montresor family crypt, wherein there is discovered a recess that is four feet in depth, three feet in width, and six to seven feet in height in between two colossal supports for the roof of that catacombs. Montresor exclaims that the cask is therein and when Fortunato investigates, the trap is sprung. Montresor chains Fortunato to the wall by wrapping the chain around his waist and padlocking it. Montresor then begins to lay bricks and walls up the recess entombing Fortunato alive.

Many authors have tried to describe the journey that Fortunato and Montresor take as being a Masonic Degree. They point to the description of the Winding Staircase, the dialogue above, and the description of the two colossal supports as evidence of this. The problem with this is that it makes no sense chronologically to what happens in the Fellowcraft degree, which is the only degree that features the winding staircase. However, when you reverse the chronological timing, a more complete picture comes into shape. The candidate at the end of the first section of the Fellowcraft degree is told the following: "In accordance with an ancient custom adopted in every regular and well-governed lodge, it will be necessary that you make a regular advance through a porch, by a flight of winding stairs consisting of three, five and seven steps to a place representing the Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple, where you will find the Worshipful Master who will give you instruction relative to the wages and jewels of a Fellowcraft."

What happens in the second section? Allow me to explain with the aid of what Fortunato and Montresor do in parenthesis.

The candidate emerges from the anteroom (Fortunato in the recess), proceeds through the two brazen pillars (Fortunato is led by Montresor into the crypt), to a winding staircase (Fortunato and Montresor descend the staircase into the vaults under Montresor's palazzo), to a place representing the Middle Chamber of King Solomons temple (Montresor and Fortunato while they are above ground), where you will find the Worshipful Master who will give you instruction relative the wages and jewels of a Fellowcraft. (Montresor's initial meeting with Fortunato. Wages (Coin) and Jewels in a classical sense would make up a treasure, and Montresor's name means: "My Treasure".) There are many jurisdictions that have within their lodge rooms a physical representation of the pillars, along with the flight of winding stairs, which takes them to a room overlooking the lodge room that represents the middle chamber of King Solomon's Temple.

Did Poe mean to do this? We'll never know. There's more than enough evidence to suggest that Poe had knowledge of this degree and incorporated it into his work. So where does that leave us? With a mystery, the way Poe intended it. I will say that Poe was, towards the end of his life, when this story was published, thinking about the nature of God and our universe. His Lengthy: "Eureka: A Prose Poem" published in 1848 gives us deep insight into his beliefs, and I would say echoes some themes discussed in Freemasonic philosophy. Even the title of this work should be familiar to every Freemason, even if it is attributed incorrectly to Pythagoras instead of Archimedes. However, there is no evidence that Poe was a Freemason. However, I do not believe that he was anti-Masonic. I think that he was critical of the institution of Freemasonry, but also perhaps intrigued by its mysteries.



Who You Gonna Call?

*by WB Darin A. Lahners
Committee on Masonic
Education*



I think that when dealing with all things paranormal, it's okay to have a healthy dose of skepticism. That doesn't mean that things you might be skeptical about don't exist. For example, we have seen in the past few years the Pentagon acknowledging that gun camera videos of UAP (Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon, commonly known as Unidentified Flying Objects or UFOs) are genuine. Unquestionably I believe that many of you reading this article will either believe or disbelieve what I'm about to tell you. Believe it or not. That's your decision.

It all started a few years ago when one of our Past Master Masters (I believe he was Master at the time of the incident) was alone in the lodge building in the area below the kitchen and heard footsteps above him. He knew he was the only one in the building at the time. Another Past Master has had experiences. Finally, it culminated with a few experiences I had in 2021 - 2022 as the Worshipful Master.

While helping Hayden Knott, the son of Past Master Greg Knott, with his Eagle Scout project to renovate the Lodge, the TV in our lodge room would mysteriously turn on by itself. Another time I had to run into the lodge room for something, and the TV or lights would be on.

I've also felt random cold spots in the lodge room, spots where it feels like the temperature has dropped even though it can't have done so because there are no fans or anything else that could have caused it. I've also been up in our lodge room with brethren and had the inner door close by itself. During this last incident, the brother I was with was my Senior Warden at the time, Travis Cain.

Luckily for us, Travis is a member of a paranormal investigation group, Ghostnet Paranormal. I had discussed Travis having his team do an investigation of the lodge a few months ago when the TV was doing its turning on by itself thing. I think that having the inner door closing on its own might have accelerated this. In any case, it was decided that they would investigate the Lodge. Now I don't know about you, but Lodge Rooms and Lodge Buildings can be creepy when alone in them especially at night. I arrived at the lodge a bit early and found the altar light was on. Now, it's highly likely that we just forgot to turn it off. I checked with the brother who was Junior Deacon for our last meeting, and he could not remember if he had or not.

What happened next I cannot explain. I was clearing an area in our preparation room to act as the command center for Travis and his group.

Normally the Group consists of Travis, Matt, Matt's wife Elena, and Jack. This evening, Elena was under the weather, but she was able to join remotely. Travis showed up and not too much long after, so did the rest of his team. My girlfriend who is now my wife, Lisa, joined me for the ghost hunting adventure. Travis and I went downstairs to the parking lot to welcome his team members. I met Jack and Matt and helped them carry equipment upstairs to the lodge. We rent out retail space on the first floor. The second floor is the lodge and the third floor is the kitchen area and attic. Upon coming up the stairs and entering our foyer, everyone was hit with the distinct smell of brewing coffee. Full disclosure, the people that we rent to run a coffee shop, so it's possible that's where the smell was coming from.

I'd think that would be the case, but the coffee shop closed at 2pm that afternoon. It'd be highly irresponsible of them to leave a coffeepot on, but I would think that at 8pm that coffee would be burning and that is not what we smelt. I moved towards the stairs leading up to the kitchen area only to discover that the kitchen light was on. Now the building was constructed in 1914. The switch is an old push-button switch. However, the light was not on when Travis and I left the building and it was on when we returned. When I observed this, Matt quickly went upstairs. He scanned the area near the switch with a K-II meter which detects levels of Electro-Magnetic frequency. The area was much higher than the other areas in the lodge that he took sample readings of.

After doing this and asking for whatever turned the light on to turn it off, and not having any success, Matt and his team began to set up Infra-Red cameras. They set one up in the Foyer, one up in the Kitchen, and one in Lodge room. Initially, they had two cameras for the lodge room, but one of the cameras didn't want to work that evening. The camera feed was hooked to a monitor and also to a hard drive to record the activity. Elena watched the monitor through Matt's cell phone camera, so she was able to take notes and jot down times when anything was captured on the video feed. Once this was set up, they started with a Spirit Box. In preparation for the evening, Travis had gone on social media to see if anyone in the community had ever had any experiences in the lodge room. One woman told Travis that she has had experiences with what she believed was a female that smelled of lilac and claimed to have seen a male entity.

The evening's investigation began with the use of something called a spirit or ghost box. The spirit box is a radio with a frequency scan mode that some ghost hunters claim allows communication with Spirits. Amazingly as soon as the Ghost Box was turned on, we almost immediately heard a voice say "Hello". It sounded like a woman's voice. The ghost box was placed next to a tesla coil that would allow the spirits to draw energy from in order for them to manifest. There was some unintelligible garble that came through a bit later, but no other communication occurred. After this, a viewer of the investigation on Facebook Live who was a Mason wanted someone to knock 3 times on the inner door. Travis asked me to do so. So I knocked. I was not expecting any response but there were two distinct thumps that were heard by myself, Travis, Lisa, and Jack. At the same time, Elena was telling Matt that she had seen a "Shadowman" in the foyer on the IR cameras.

The investigation went upstairs to the kitchen where the steps have been heard. There the team placed the spirit box and an infra-red motion sensor. The motion sensor puts out an infrared beam that sounds an alarm whenever anything breaks that beam. The investigation there did not yield any results until we came back downstairs with the spirit box, leaving the detector upstairs. The investigation went back into the lodge room, where the team attempted to capture something called EVP's or Electronic Voice Phenomenon. They asked a bunch of questions to whatever might be in the room. The EVPs turned up an answer to only one of the questions. When asked about telling us its age, you could hear a "NO" on the recording.

While downstairs, the motion detector went off. Travis immediately asked for the motion detector to be set off three more times. I was watching the kitchen area on the monitor through the IR camera. There was nothing in the kitchen. In rapid succession, it was set off twice. Then, after a pause, it went off another time. We attempted to trigger the motion detector by jumping up and down to make sure that there wasn't any movement on the second floor where we were that could have set it off. We were unable to do so. After attempting without success to have the motion sensor triggered again, we took a break. I immediately sent a text to Greg Knott and told him that he should come up to experience this.

While the rest of the team was outside, Travis and I went upstairs to give the Grand hailing sign, Greg followed but did not participate. The thought I had was that if the spirit was a former mason, we would see if his obligation was binding enough to come to our aid. Travis and I gave the sign, and during which Greg experienced a cold shooting sensation that went down his back. That was all that happened. After that, Matt and Travis went into the lodge room, while Lisa and I stayed in the command center watching the IR cameras with Elena. Jack and Greg were in the lodge room. The cameras had been picking up a lot of dust orbs, but also there were a few orbs I saw that couldn't be explained away as dust. One of which came down from the ceiling in the foyer area (where the kitchen area is above), and then shot directly up and came through the floor into the kitchen. Now the possibility of that happening with the camera picking up dust. While Matt and Travis were in the lodge room, Matt began to experience pain in his lower intestine while standing in a spot east of the Altar in an area where I have experienced cold spots. Later Jack would complain of the same issue while in the same area. Coincidence? Maybe. Matt and Travis went back upstairs and while upstairs, a canister of comet, the cleaner, fell off a shelf.

It was approaching midnight, and Greg went home. The next thing that the team tried was something called the Estes method. The Estes method is a process by which one places a blindfold under one's eyes and wears isolation headphones plugged into a device that creates white noise (the aforementioned Spirit Box). Another person sits in front of the person that is sensory deprived and asks questions. The person that is sensory deprived then hopefully is able to better hear any audible voices that come through the headset. All of us took a turn attempting this. Travis was first, and while he was doing it and Matt was asking him questions, he made a movement like he was smelling something. Matt said he smelt coffee too. Once again, was it from downstairs? Or was it something associated with the spirit we were trying to communicate with? We'll never know. While doing the method, Matt asked if the spirit wanted to control Travis, and immediately Travis said "No". There was a response when Matt asked if they wanted to speak to him, but Travis couldn't make it out. The questioning continued, during which time Matt felt something touching his neck.

When he asked if it was this spirit that he was talking to touching his neck, Travis said: "How?". Matt after this claimed he saw a ball of light next to Travis, however, it was not seen on the Facebook Live feed. Hopefully, it was caught on the recording through the security cameras. Travis claimed he felt a sensation of a presence being in front of him during his time doing the Estes method. It was then Matt's turn. He felt something touch him on his shoulder. Like static electricity. Other than that, he responded to a question about the Order of Eastern Star. He also claimed to feel really cold. It was then Lisa's turn, and Lisa had no success.

It was then my turn. Now I can only explain that when you are blindfolded and the headphones are on you, there is just white noise coming through the headphones. You can tell that someone is talking but you can't make out what they are saying. Travis explained it like Charlie Brown's parents. You could tell that Travis was speaking and when he was done, but I could not hear what he was saying. Every time he stopped speaking, there was a more focused burst of static as if something was trying to come through the headphones, but I was unable to make out any words. I felt extremely cold at one point, and at another, I felt like something touched my left hand. When Travis took the blindfold off me, I told him again that I felt cold and then asked if he had asked it to touch me, to which he replied that he had. Another interesting thing that happened was that the things that were on top of the tesla coil stopped spinning a few times and Travis had to push them to get them restarted. Matt explained and demonstrated that the only thing that could do that would be something touching the base of the coil or placing one's hand over the spinning things on the coil.

It was then Jack's turn. Travis started to question Jack and the coil stopped spinning again. Jack had some replies to Travis's questioning, but one of his answers did not make sense until later. Travis asked who sat in the chair directly behind him, which was the Senior Warden's station. Jack replied "Dale". The name rang a bell with me but I was unable to place it until I showed the team the pictures of the Past Masters that we had. There on the board was Charles W. Dale. It was our belief that the entity might be Dr. Henry Elmer Davis, who was instrumental in starting the lodge and died at a relatively young age.

Davis was the second Worshipful Master and the first one that would have been over the lodge after it was built in 1914. The first Worshipful Master would have been the one who led the lodge while it was Under Dispensation. I do not know where they met while they were U.D. and the lodge was being built. I will have to research to see if Dale was in the West the year prior to being Worshipful Master, and if not, when he served as Senior Warden. After this, the investigation came to a close.

The story continued the next morning for me. Upon awaking, I noticed my left hand. There was a scratch or irritation exactly where I felt I was touched the night before. I immediately sent Travis a text. He said that he's had physical after-effects and that Matt and Elena had experienced this as well. Now is it possible I did this to myself while I was asleep? Sure. I once again found it extremely coincidental, however.



Due to the extraordinary high strangeness that was experienced that evening, we made plans to have another investigation. A few months later, this took place, and I was able to have Robert Johnson, his son Elliott join this investigation along with Ghostnet. There didn't seem to be much activity occurring in the lodge room this time, however there was activity in the kitchen.

The members of Ghostnet were able to ask a series of questions to the spirit in that area, and they got intelligent response to the questions which were asked by having the spirit activate the Infrared Motion detector.

You can watch the episode they filmed featuring the intelligent response at the link provided at the end of this article.

Occasionally, whoever is haunting the lodge still likes to let us know that they are present. At a third degree which took place a few months ago, everyone was in the lodge room and we heard a loud noise which sounded like something fell in the Foyer outside. When we reached a break in the sections, we were able to find out that a metal water bottle which was on a table ended up on the other side of the Foyer. Needless to say, some of the brethren from other lodges were not excited to find out that we thought that we had a spirit roaming the Masonic Temple.

Subsequently, our lodge has set up surveillance cameras to monitor the entrance, foyer, kitchen and lodge room. The cameras get triggered by movement, and I have saved some video of orbs materializing in the altar and moving around the lodge room and kitchen, as well as going through solid objects. Hopefully the spirit decides to move objects during a degree we will catch it on the cameras.

One thing is certain to me. Something strange is occurring at St. Joseph #970. I don't know what the cause is but I don't have an explanation for many of the things I witnessed. Do I think my lodge is haunted? Yes, I feel that strongly. However, maybe it's just confirmation bias. All I know is that a lodge is a sacred space. I feel that we perform a form of Magick with our ritual. I feel that there is a lot of energy in that lodge room in particular because of that. I can only think of the hundreds of men that went through degrees there since 1914. Does what we do in our lodges leave something behind? I'd like to think that it does. So maybe what we tapped into that. So while I believe the lodge is haunted, there might be a mundane explanation as well. I don't know. I can only say that I have had an amazing experience trying to figure it out.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGhrLRWE-LY>



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Famous American Freemason: Brother Harry Houdini

by WB Todd E. Creason



“My brain is the key that sets my mind free.”

Every day, the boy's boss, the local locksmith, went to get a few beers over the lunch hour. Most days, he didn't leave the boy alone with a hulking, surly giant, but one day he did. There was no question that the boy was afraid. The man was the ugliest, most terrifying looking character the boy had ever seen, with a bristly beard, a mean disposition, and an jagged scar that ran down the side of his face. And this man—a criminal and prisoner—was wearing heavy handcuffs. The sheriff had brought his prisoner, handcuffs and all, into the shop because he'd broken his key off in the lock, and there was no way to get the handcuffs off.

Because the sheriff and his prisoner had arrived near the lunch hour, the locksmith instructed the boy to get a hacksaw and cut the handcuffs off while he and the sheriff went out for a drink. The boy frantically sawed away at the hardened metal cuffs, breaking several saw blades in the process. The last broken blade had very nearly cut the man's hand, earning the boy a sharp, ominous threat from the man. In nearly an hour, the boy hadn't made even a dent in the cuffs, and his boss was due back in a few minutes. The boy didn't like the idea of setting this man loose in a store that sold, among other things, pistols and derringers, but times were hard then. He was lucky to have a job, and his desire to please his employer was stronger than his fear of the man.

There had been a good reason his father had arranged the apprenticeship for the boy with the locksmith and a good reason the locksmith had taken the boy on—he was good with locks. As a youngster, he used to lock and unlock all the cabinets and cupboards in his house using a small common tool—a buttonhook. In fact, he was notorious for being the little boy who'd unlocked the doors of all the shops in his hometown one evening. That day when he failed to saw off the handcuffs, he decided that if he couldn't defeat the cuffs by hacking them off, maybe he could pick the locks. That was not what his employer had asked him to do, but it was the only alternative he knew.

He clipped off a piece of piano wire and fashioned it into an appropriately sized tool. Then he paused. The last thing he wanted was for this criminal to see what he was about to do.

“Do you mind looking the other way?” he asked gently.

“Like hell I can,” the man responded.

After the boy worked on the first cuff for about a minute, it suddenly clicked open. It took him half that time to open the second cuff.

The locksmith and the sheriff returned just as he was finishing. The prisoner was still sitting there, stunned at what the boy had done. He picked up the cuffs and looked them over carefully. When the locksmith suddenly realized the boy hadn't cut the cuffs off, he took them from the giant and looked at them in amazement.

"That is good work, Ehrich. That is damned good work."

Ehrich would go on to become a great locksmith, the best the world has ever seen. There wasn't any kind of lock that he couldn't defeat, but he specialized in handcuffs. He opened locks and handcuffs all over the world. He escaped from many unusual situations—he was locked in prison cells, mailbags, straight-jackets, and coffins. He could even escape being locked in a large milk can filled to the top with water. And nobody ever knew his secret.

Well, that's not exactly correct. Ehrich was forced to reveal something to the prisoner that day. He'd seen a great secret which made that young boy into a world famous man and an iconic figure. Ehrich said of the prisoner years later, "He is the only person in the world besides my wife who knows how I open locks, and I have never heard from him since."

That boy would grow into the man known the world over by a single name—Houdini.

Ehrich Weisz was born on March 24, 1874, in Budapest, Hungary, to Rabbi Mayer Samuel Weisz and Cecilia Steiner Weisz. Hoping to secure a better life for his family, Mayer immigrated to America and changed his last name to Weiss.

Through a friend, Weiss gained a job serving as a rabbi to a small Jewish congregation in Appleton, Wisconsin. His family followed him to America in 1876. Because Mayer Weiss's religious views were considered old-fashioned by the Appleton congregation, he was dismissed from his position. The family moved to Milwaukee when Ehrich was about eight. The times were difficult. From a young age, Ehrich helped out by working. He sold newspapers and shined shoes to help support the family. When he was not working, Ehrich practiced acrobatic stunts. His first public performance was when he was nine years old. He hung on a trapeze suspended from a tree while wearing red socks made by his mother. He billed himself as "Ehrich, the Prince of the Air."

At age twelve, Ehrich ran away from home, hopping a freight car to Kansas City. A year later, he re-joined his family, who were by then living in New York City but still struggling to survive. In New York, Ehrich and his younger brother, Theo, began to pursue their interest in magic. Ehrich's idol was the great French magician Robert Houdin. When Ehrich started performing magic, he added an "i" to the end and began billing himself as "Houdini." He undoubtedly got the "Harry" because it sounded much like his childhood nickname Ehrie.

Harry Houdini began his professional career at age seventeen, doing magic shows in music halls, at sideshows, and at the amusement park on New York's Coney Island. It wasn't unusual for him to perform twenty shows each day. For a short time, he worked with Theo, billed as the Houdini Brothers. But when Harry met Beatrice "Bess" Raymond, a teenager who was also attempting a career in show business, she joined the act as Harry's new partner, and Theo started a solo career as a magician under the name "Hardeen." Harry and Bess married in 1894, remaining devoted companions and partners for the rest of their lives.



In 1895, the Houdinis joined the Welsh Brothers Circus. Harry did magic while Bess sang and danced. Together they performed a trick called "Metamorphosis," where Harry and Bess switched places in a locked trunk. Harry wasn't satisfied with his small act. He continued to work on new tricks and to develop his showmanship. He also became an expert at escaping handcuffs. Arriving in a new town, Houdini would claim he could escape from any handcuffs the local police had—and he did. These publicity stunts were excellent advertising for his shows. Houdini offered \$100 to anyone who could provide handcuffs he couldn't get out of, but he never had to pay that reward.

As his name and reputation spread, Houdini decided to take his show on the road to Europe. In 1900, Harry and Bess sailed to England with no bookings and only enough money to survive a week, but Houdini was able to get an engagement at a London theater. After one particularly successful stunt, he found himself booked solid. Sold-out shows followed all over Europe. Wherever he went, he repeated the stunt. He called upon local police to restrain him in any way they could think up, but he escaped from all of them.

By the time Houdini returned to the United States in 1905, he was an international celebrity. Among the stunts performed in America were escaping from prison cells, squirming from straitjackets while suspended upside-down, and jumping into rivers from bridges while chained and handcuffed.

His death-defying stunts and showmanship also extended to his famous milk can escape. Houdini was cuffed and shackled, lowered into an oversized milk can that was filled to overflowing with water, and then hidden by a curtain. Before he submerged himself and the can was sealed, he would ask the audience members to take a deep breath and hold it as long as they could. As the members of the audience, red-faced, could hold their breath no longer, they realized that if they were in the milk can, they would be drowning, and yet Houdini remained trapped. Hidden behind his curtain, Houdini was able to escape in three minutes, but he frequently stayed behind the curtain for much longer to make his re-appearance all the more dramatic.



Harry and Bess lived in a large house they purchased in New York when they weren't traveling. They never had children, but Harry's mother lived with them until she died in 1913. Her death was the greatest tragedy of his life. For weeks afterward, he made almost daily visits to the cemetery. He said in a speech to the Magician's Club, "It seemed the end of the world when she was taken from me."

Eventually, Houdini was able to return to work, but he continued to mourn his mother for the rest of his life.

Partly as a result of his mother's death, Houdini renewed an early interest in spiritualism, the ability to communicate with the dead. Houdini wanted to believe that such communication was possible, but after many years of tricking people, he knew a trick when he saw one. He went on a crusade against phony spiritualists. He felt they were profiting by preying on people who, in their mourning, wished for nothing more than to talk again with their departed relatives. He often passed up better-paying opportunities to lecture on the subject, and he unmasked many frauds in the cities he visited. In his own act, Houdini often recreated many of the tricks the charlatans used to trick people at a séance into believing they were making contact with spirits from beyond the grave. Houdini had a standing offer of \$10,000 to anyone who could produce a result in a séance that he couldn't reproduce himself using magic and trickery. No one ever collected that reward either.

Houdini did believe contact with the dead was possible, but he didn't believe that most of the mediums claiming to be able to make that contact were legitimate. Because of his interest in spiritualism, Houdini developed a close friendship with the creator of Sherlock Holmes, author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who was a true believer in spiritualism. In fact, Doyle was convinced that Houdini employed psychic powers to perform his remarkable escapes. Houdini denied that he had such powers. He even tried to explain to Doyle how he actually did some of the things he was able to do, but Doyle didn't believe him. Eventually, this rift over spiritualism and psychic ability ended their friendship.

When America entered the First World War, Houdini attempted to enlist in the army, but at forty-three, he was rejected as being too old. Unable to fight, Houdini found other ways to serve. He entertained the troops by performing free shows and organized Liberty Bond shows to help finance the war.

In the fall of 1926, Houdini put together a new show and took it on the road. It was an elaborate, two-and-a-half-hour show that required Houdini to be on stage almost the entire time.

The highlight of the show was the Chinese water torture escape, which had become one of Houdini's most famous stunts. In that escape, Houdini's hands and feet were bound while he was lowered, upside down, into a glass tank filled with water. The tour seemed plagued by bad luck from the beginning. The first bad luck was when Bess contracted food poisoning. Houdini stayed awake all night by her side. By the time they reached the next town, Houdini had gone three nights in a row without sleep. Then, during another show, he broke his ankle during the Chinese water torture escape. Houdini was used to working with injuries and completed the show, but the pain from his ankle was excruciating, and he was awake all night. Even so, the show must go on, and the tour proceeded.

Houdini stuck to his schedule, which included giving a lecture at McGill University. The next day, several students from the lecture were chatting with Houdini in his dressing room. One of the students, an amateur boxer, asked if it was true that Houdini could withstand any blow to his body above the waist. Houdini admitted that it was true and, despite his weakened condition, gave the student permission to test him. As Houdini began to rise from the couch where he was sitting, the student dealt him several sharp punches in the stomach before he had time to tighten his abdomen. The blows caused Houdini a great deal of pain, which persisted until his show that afternoon.

The next day, he was no better. By then, he was also suffering from chills and sweating. Houdini performed two shows, and the company moved on to Detroit, Michigan. Still in pain and feeling worse all the time, Houdini finally saw a doctor, who urged him to go immediately to the hospital, but he refused. Only after completing the show did Houdini finally agree to go to the hospital. He was in bad shape. When the doctors operated on him, they found that his appendix had burst, causing peritonitis, a usually fatal disease in the age before antibiotics.

Houdini was given little hope of surviving even after a second operation. Realizing he was near death, Houdini shared a secret message with Bess to be used as proof of his identity in the event that he was able to communicate with her from beyond the grave. Harry Houdini died on Halloween, 1926. Despite annual séances on the anniversary of his death, Bess was never able to contact him. She died in 1943.

Without question, Houdini was one of the greatest magicians and showmen in history. He continues to fascinate magic aficionados. His famous tricks have been done over and over by many of the talented magicians that followed. Some of the tricks have been updated and modernized over time, but by their death defying nature alone, they are still very much identifiable as belonging to Houdini. The great magicians who have kept Houdini's spirit alive by continuing to bring these illusions and tricks to new audiences do so not to outdo Houdini but to honor his great mastery of the craft.

Brother Harry Houdini became a Mason in St. Cecile Lodge No. 568, New York, New York, in 1923. He received his Entered Apprentice Degrees on July 17 and his Fellow Craft Degree on July 31. He was raised a Master Mason on August 21, 1923. He became a life member on October 30, 1923. He was also a member of the Shrine Temple.

~Excerpt from Todd E. Creason's award winning book Famous American Freemasons Volume II.



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www.nymasons.org

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www.MCME1949.org

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www.esotericon.net

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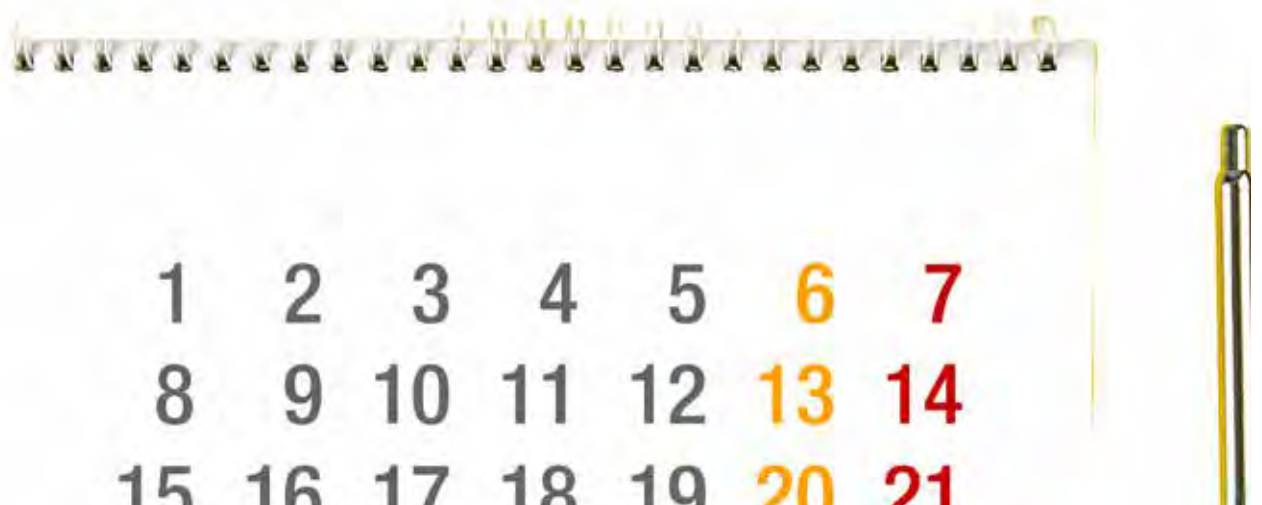
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Famous Undead

Freemasons - Dracula???



*by WB Darin A. Lahners
Committee on Masonic
Education*

Abraham Stoker was born near Dublin, Ireland on November 8, 1847. He graduated from Trinity College with honors in mathematics. In 1872, Stoker is best remembered for *Dracula, The Undead*. Published in 1897 to mixed reviews, it is now considered a classic of gothic literature. The title character, Count Dracula, endures to this day as one of the most sinister monsters of horror. Dracula is a centuries-old vampire and a Transylvanian nobleman. He inhabits a decaying castle in the Carpathian Mountains.

The novel begins with Jonathan Harker, a young London solicitor (a lawyer) traveling to Transylvania to help a rich nobleman, Count Dracula, purchase an estate in England. Dracula is planning to immigrate to England, and wants Harker to help him with all the legal details. Harker is at first impressed by Dracula's suave politeness, but is soon creeped out by the Count's uncanny ability to communicate with wolves and by the lack of servants in the Count's huge castle. Soon after, Harker realizes that he's a prisoner.

One evening, he attempts to escape, only to be discovered and seduced/almost devoured by three brides of Dracula. Dracula rescues him at the last minute, and Harker realizes that Dracula is only keeping him alive to finish the real estate transaction.

Harker decides to make a break for it and only barely escapes from the castle alive. He's not able to head straight back to England, though. He comes down with a severe case of brain fever because of the shock and spends many weeks recuperating in a convent in the countryside in Hungary.

Back in England, Harker's fiancée, Mina, is hanging out with her best friend Lucy in a seaside town. Mina's worried about Jonathan and wonders why she hasn't heard from him in so long, but Lucy can only think about her own suitors. She gets three marriage proposals in the same day by three friends: Dr. John Seward, a doctor who runs a mental hospital; Quincey Morris, an American; and Arthur Holmwood, the son of Lord Godalming. She accepts the proposal of Arthur Holmwood. Even though Quincey Morris and Dr. Seward are disappointed, they still stay friends with Holmwood.

Meanwhile, Dracula has arrived in England but hasn't shown himself yet. A patient in Dr. Seward's hospital, Renfield, continually captures and eats insects, spiders, and birds and says that the "Master" is coming soon. Lucy starts acting weird—she seems to be losing blood, but no one knows where the blood's going. Her fiancé, Lord Arthur Holmwood, gets worried, and Dr. Seward sends for his friend and mentor, Van Helsing, to check her out.

Van Helsing realizes that there's a vampire involved. He's a scientist and doctor, but he's also well-versed in the occult, so he knows what to do to kill vampires. Even after giving her multiple blood transfusions, they're not able to save Lucy, and she dies. But Van Helsing knows she's not really dead. The four men break into her tomb and catch vampire Lucy coming back from a foray in the neighboring village. They stabbed her in the heart and cut off her head to ensure she's really dead.

Mina finally hears from Jonathan and goes to Budapest to pick him up. They get married at the convent where he's been recovering from his illness and come back to England. Harker, Van Helsing, Dr. Seward, Morris, and Holmwood all swear to get rid of Dracula once and for all. Mina has to hide in Dr. Seward's office at the hospital while the men go vampire-hunting. Unfortunately, Renfield knows about Dracula and invites him into the building (vampires can't enter a building unless they've been invited), and he starts drinking Mina's blood. The men come back in time to find her being force-fed some of Dracula's blood.

Now they must kill Dracula quickly, or Mina will turn into a vampire as Lucy did. Dracula leads them on a spectacular chase back to Transylvania, where they finally catch up to him and kill him. Mina is saved. Quincey Morris gets stabbed and dies during the final confrontation.

Stoker is shown in United Grand Lodge of England records as having joined only one Lodge: the Buckingham and Chandos Lodge, No. 1150, which was formed by Officers and Sergeants of the 1st Middlesex Artillery Volunteers. He was possibly a member of the Golden Dawn and the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia as well. So, Stoker was familiar with Freemasonry. Sir Henry Irving employed Stoker as his business manager. Irving was considered to be one of Britain's greatest stage actors. He took over management of the Lyceum theatre in 1878, and under Irving's management, it became famous worldwide for the quality of its theatrical productions. Stoker would claim that he based Dracula on Irving. Irving was the first stage actor in history to be knighted in 1895. Irving was initiated into Jerusalem Lodge No. 197 in 1877 in London. Stoker's brother Sir William Thornley Stoker, 1st Baronet, was also a Freemason.

Dracula deals with several themes: Good Versus Evil or (Darkness Versus Light), The limits of scientific knowledge versus the supernatural, Salvation and Damnation, Masculinity and Femininity, and the consequences of Modernization.

Many have said that there are masonic themes in Dracula, however specific quotes are hard to find. In chapter 2 the Count says to Jonathan Harker, "Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!" In *The Lair of the White Worm* by Stoker, there is a more masonic phrase: "We two are, I take it, tiled. So that there come no wrong or harm to anyone else in the enlargement of the bounds of our confidence!"

Dracula has been portrayed by many actors, such as Bela Lugosi, Gary Oldman, Lon Chaney Jr, and Christopher Lee. Lon Chaney Jr has been listed as a Freemason on several Grand Lodge sites. Here is a brief biography of Bro. Chaney Jr.

Lon's real name was Creighton Tull Chaney (February 10, 1906 – July 12, 1973), known by his stage name Lon Chaney Jr., was an American actor known for playing Larry Talbot in the 1941 film *The Wolf Man* and its various crossovers, as well as portraying other monsters such as *The Mummy*, *Frankenstein's Monster*, and *Count Alucard* (son of Dracula) in numerous horror films produced by Universal Studios. He also portrayed Lennie Small in *Of Mice and Men* (1939). Originally referenced in films as Creighton Chaney, he was later credited as "Lon Chaney Jr." in 1935, and after 1941's *Man-Made Monster*, beginning as early as *The Wolf Man* later that same year, he was almost always billed under his more famous father's name as Lon Chaney. Chaney had English, French and Irish ancestry, and his career in movies and television spanned four decades, from 1931 to 1971.

Chaney was married twice and had two sons, Lon Ralph Chaney (born July 3, 1928) and Ronald Creighton Chaney (born March 18, 1930), both now deceased. He was survived by a grandson, Ron Chaney, who attended film conventions and discussed his grandfather's life and film career.

Chaney was well-liked by some co-workers – "sweet" is the adjective that most commonly emerges from those who acted with, and liked him – yet he was capable of intense dislikes.

For instance, he and frequent co-star Evelyn Ankers did not get along at all despite their on-camera chemistry. He was also known to befriend younger actors and stand up for older ones who Chaney felt were belittled by the studios. One example was that of William Farnum, a major silent star who played a bit part in *The Mummy's Curse*. According to co-star Peter Coe, Chaney demanded that Farnum be given his own chair on the set and be treated with respect, or else he would walk off the picture.

Chaney had run-ins with actor Frank Reicher (whom he nearly strangled on camera in *The Mummy's Ghost*) and director Robert Siodmak (over whose head Chaney broke a vase). Actor Robert Stack claimed in his 1980 autobiography that Chaney and drinking buddy Broderick Crawford were known as "the monsters" around the Universal Pictures lot because of their drunken behavior that frequently resulted in bloodshed.

Chaney died of heart failure at age 67 on July 12, 1973 in San Clemente, California. His body was donated for medical research. Chaney's corpse was dissected by medical students.

He was honored by appearing as the Wolf Man on one of a 1997 series of United States postage stamps depicting movie monsters. His grandson Ron Chaney Jr. frequently appears as a guest at horror movie conventions.

So there you have it. *Dracula* was written by a Freemason, based upon Sir Henry Irving and portrayed by Lon Chaney Jr. (Both Freemasons). The novel does deal with some Masonic themes. Therefore, *Dracula* is obviously the most famous Undead "Freemason" on our membership rolls.

A MERRY HALLOWEEN



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