

WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

Book Review

The Transactions of The Rubicon Masonic Society, Volume I

John W. Bizzack, P. M. and Dan M. Kemble, P. M., Editors

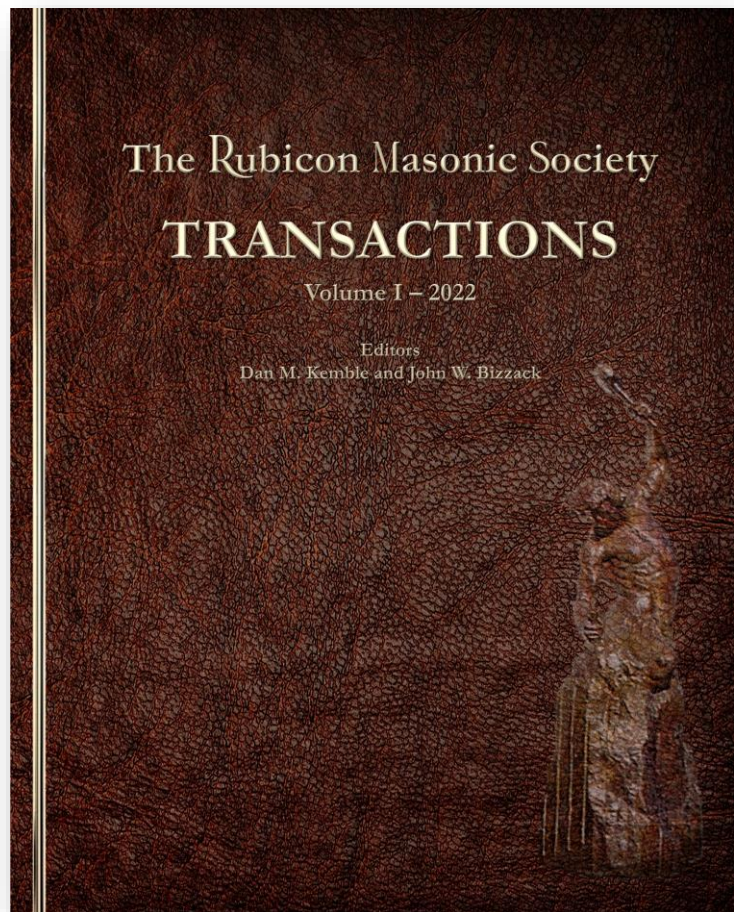
Reviewed by Keith W. Gunkel, P. M., Junior Warden, William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Let me begin this review by stating that more than any other review I have prepared, this one was the most challenging. Instead of having one author's mindset and storyline to follow, this had many more. Eighteen individuals (nineteen if you count the writer of the Introduction), each of whom possess remarkable insights with respect to Freemasonry, shared their ideas about Masonry, the factual history of the Masonic fraternity, and, as Paul Harvey would say, "The rest of the story" as it relates to Freemasonry.

The Rubicon Masonic Society is an invitation-only group of Masons based in Lexington, Kentucky. Several members of Rubicon are also members of William O. Ware Lodge of Research. Rubicon holds no charter and performs no ritual, nor does it confer any degrees. The mission of The Rubicon Masonic Society is the advancement of the historic aim and purpose of Freemasonry.

In the summer of 2023, Rubicon published *The Transactions of The Rubicon Masonic Society, Volume I*. There are thirty-five articles covering a wide range of topics relevant to Freemasonry. One hopes that subsequent volumes of Rubicon's Transactions will be published with regularity.

Notably, the Introduction to the Transactions was written by W. B. S. Brent Morris, a renowned Masonic author in his



own right, and an Honorary Member of The Rubicon Masonic Society. W. B. Morris's Introduction notes that the following entries represent a diverse and multi-faceted cross-section of topics in Freemasonry.

Volume I of the **Transactions** is dedicated to R. W. Brother Thomas W. Jackson, the long-time Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, who died shortly before its publication. R. W. Brother Jackson was an ardent supporter (and a frequent guest) of The Rubicon Masonic Society. One of R. W. Brother Jackson's essays, "What Are We Trying To Save," opens the Transactions.

Intriguingly, two of the first offerings in the Transactions were written by relatively new Masons. Brother Antonio M. Mantica, while an Entered Apprentice Mason, offered his thoughts in, "The View from the Starting Line," and Brother Timothy C.

Aven shared his thoughts on becoming an Entered Apprentice in, "Initiation."

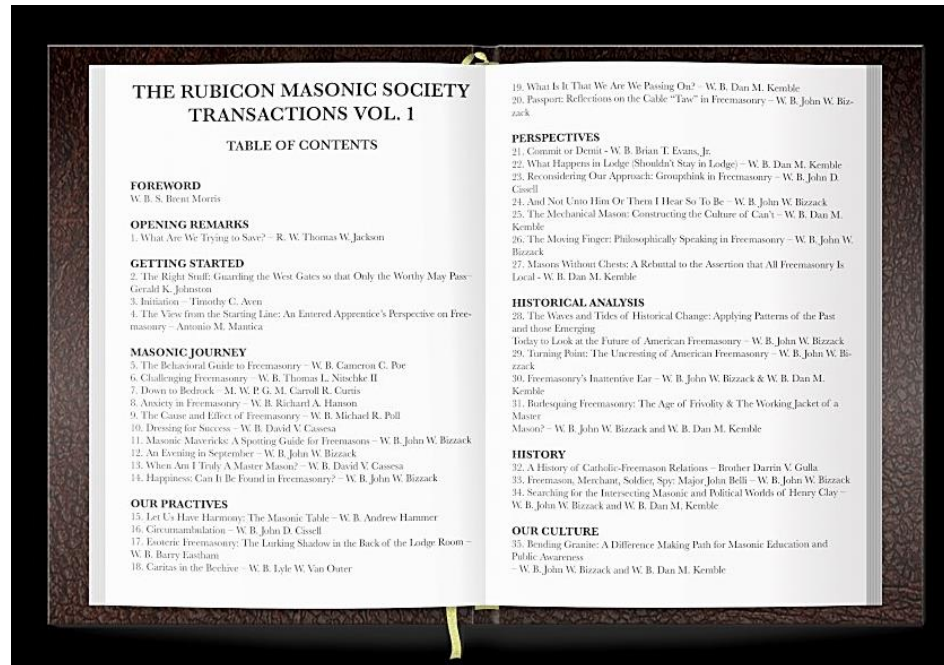
The list of the several authors of the works that are included in this volume reads like a Masonic "who's who." W. B. Andrew Hammer, author of *Observing the Craft*, offers his take on the art of Masonic dining in "Let Us Have Harmony: The

Masonic Table." Kentucky's senior Past Grand Master, M. W. Brother Carroll M. Curtis contributed, "Down to Bedrick," a very early call to the practice of Observant Masonry. Brief biographical data is included in the **Transactions** for each of the authors whose work is included.

The separate essays take on a multitude of issues and address varying themes found in American

Freemasonry. One Brother described Masonry as a Kaleidoscope, while another Brother described it as a crazy-quilt. After reading each of the articles contained in this book, I would describe Masonry as a puzzle. As a child (and as an adult), I look at the picture on the box and if it interests me, or I find the image appealing, I open the box, shake all the pieces out of the box, and locate my four corners. In this case the four corners are W. B. Michael R. Poll's "The Cause and Effect of Freemasonry," W. B. Cameron C. Poe's "The Behavioral Guide to Freemasonry," the joint composition of W. B. John W. Bizzack and W. B. Dan M. Kemble, "Bending Granite: A Difference Making Path for Masonic Education and Public Awareness, and the last corner is W. B. Bizzack's "The Waves and Tides of Historical Change: Applying Patterns of the Past and Those Emerging Today to Look at the Future of American Freemasonry."

Next are the outer border pieces to complete the frame of the puzzle. Essays that remind me of my own experiences include W. B. Brian T. Evans, Jr.'s "Commit or Demit," and W. B. John D. Cissell's "Reconsidering Our Approach: Groupthink in Freemasonry." There are several others that fall into this category as well.



Then you look at each piece and study it for the right fit. Each essay in this book is insightful and interesting from all perspectives. I was born and raised Catholic, and even went to a Catholic high school. I enlisted in the Marines, attended a non-denominational church service, but still have a mooring towards the Catholic faith. My research, though, leads me to find that Masonry is not welcome in this faith. Brother Darrin Gulla's "A History of Catholic-Freemason Relations" helped me understand what I have previously experienced. I found this part of the puzzle very well illustrated within these pages.

Reading the history of some great men and their Masonic path helped me recognize that there is a difference in being famous and being a good Mason. Some famous men happened to be Freemasons. Likely, they found that Freemasonry affirmed the values that they already held. There are only a handful of men, thought, who are famous because they were Freemasons. That idea is expressed in several of the essays included in the *Transactions*, particularly Bizzack and Kemble's, "Searching for the Intersecting Masonic and Political Worlds of Henry Clay."

I recommend this collection of Masonic research, writing and idealisms to all for their enjoyment and the discovery of the meaning of this fraternity and what it truly has to offer. As I placed the last piece of the puzzle in completion, I found page 209 and the paragraph listed at the top to be that piece. Those words are:

Effectively addressing and creating lasting solutions to issues that face American Freemasonry in the 21st century without a working knowledge of what created and led to the issues in the first place, is contrary to reason. When the absence of such a contextual framework persists, perceived solutions to issues continue to be generated, but positive results are seldom, if ever, achieved.

Brothers of The Rubicon Masonic Society, thank you for your dedication and creative writing within these pages.

Copies of *The Transactions of The Rubicon Masonic Society* are available through online booksellers, as well as at Rubicon events.