



**Houston Masonic
Library & Museum Foundation
3270 Barker Oaks Drive
Houston, Texas 77077
www.houstonmasoniclibrary.org**

August 19th, 2009

Dear Friends of the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation;

***“The challenge of history is to recover the past and
introduce it to the present.” ~David Thelen***

I am writing to you on this occasion to introduce the past to you and, for some, this will be a memorable re-introduction of the past.

A remarkable fast-paced sequence of events, diligent research and uncovered documents has lead to the re-discovery of the rich and fascinating history surrounding one of Houston Texas’ oldest landmark buildings – The Masonic Temple Building.

Please mark your calendars for several special upcoming events sponsored by the Houston Masonic Museum Library and Foundation to commemorate the special historical treasure of The Masonic Temple Building, the finding and opening of a lost time-capsule and the fascinating 100 year-old, four generation long thread of iconic involvement in Houston’s rich history by the Tellepsen family and construction business.

The first of these events is the “Hands Across the Ages” event where a time capsule that was placed by a Master Mason in 1923 will be retrieved from its eighty-six year old resting place by one of his living descendants.

In early 2009 a dedicated team of sleuths, detectives and amateur archeologists with the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation undertook a research project on the Masonic Temple Building located at 1407 Fannin Street at Clay, in downtown Houston, Texas. A large framed lithograph of the building is located in the hallway of the Masonic Museum & Library Building.

The Masonic Temple Building, as it is now known, was completed in 1923. The building was home for over forty years, from 1923 to 1964, to two long-time Houston Masonic Lodges, Gray Lodge #329 and Temple Lodge #4.

The architect for the Masonic Temple Building, a Master Mason named Alfred C. Finn (1883 - 1964), was raised in Gray Lodge in 1905. Finn’s son was also an architect and a member of Gray #329. Finn also belonged to the York and Scottish Rite bodies. Born in Bellville, Texas, Alfred Finn was most well known as the architect for many Houston landmarks including the Cullen Performance Hall, the San Jacinto Monument and the Arabia Temple Crippled Children’s Hospital.

The contractor for the Masonic Temple Building was a young man named Tom Tellepsen. In 1909 Tom Tellepsen founded what is now recognized as the Tellepsen Commercial and Industrial Construction Company. Tellepsen's first notable construction projects included the Miller Outdoor Theater (1922), the Rice University Chemistry Building and The Masonic Temple Building in 1923. The Tellepsen Company and family have played an integral role in creating much of Houston's historical landscape. Tom Tellepsen was made a Mason in Temple Lodge in 1921 and, at the time of his death in 1975, was a 53 year Mason.

Today, the Masonic Temple Building is currently owned by the Finkelstein Foundation and is the offices of the Medallion Oil Company, an independent oil and gas exploration company established in 1963.

In May of 2009, a meeting was held that included Mr. Robert Pilegge, the Executive Director of the Finkelstein Foundation and the CEO of Medallion Oil Company, Tadd Tellepsen, the great-grandson of Tom Tellepsen, Randon Reaves, the Chairman of the Houston Masonic Museum and Library Foundation and, Bob Rogers and Mark Herzog, Members on the Board of Directors of the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation. The meeting discussed not only the history of the Masonic Temple Building, but also the possibility of exploring and locating a time capsule allegedly buried somewhere within the structure of the building.

After several weeks of research, Alfred Finn's original architectural drawings and specifications from 1923 were found by Mark Herzog. And, to everyone's surprise, the supposed location of the time capsule was identified. Soon, on June 22nd, 2009, after some picking, digging and deconstruction from the inside of the building at the street level, and behind the location of the Masonic cornerstone laid in 1923, was found a lead box, exactly as specified by Finn.

The Masonic Cornerstone ceremony has a long tradition and colorful history. The ceremony itself is an expression of stability and strength of the building being built and an expression of good health and peace to the workers and occupants of a building. Unfortunately, the advent of steel buildings has seen fewer cornerstone ceremonies performed.

In 1923 a traditional Masonic Cornerstone laying ceremony, a formal and solemn event still in existence today, was held at The Masonic Temple Building. When this cornerstone was originally laid and time-capsule enclosed, a group of four hundred Masons marched with the Shriner's Arabia Temple Band, from the Grand Lodge Building on Main Street to the unfinished Masonic Temple Building. A photograph taken of this 1923 ceremony exists today.

There is no record telling us the contents of the time capsule. However, there is little historical doubt that Tom Tellepsen, as the principal contractor for the building of the Masonic Temple Building, would have likely been, if not the last, then one of the last persons to have touched, or in fact, may have placed the time capsule into the cavity behind the cornerstone which will remain there until September 8th, 2009.

I am writing to invite you, all Masons, and the public to attend the "Hands Across the Ages", opening of the 1923 Cornerstone and Time Capsule opening event on Tuesday, September 8th, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at The Masonic Temple Building located at 1407 Fannin Street at Clay, Houston, Texas.

This event is proudly sponsored by the Tellepsen Company and the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation with the generous support of the Finkelstein Partners Ltd.

As in 1923, the Masonic Temple Building time capsule event will begin at 10:00 a.m.. We will gather at 9:30 a.m. on the Plaza in front of the First City Tower corner of Fannin and Lamar at 1001 Fannin, then march approximately 3 blocks to the Masonic Temple Building. The march will be led by traditional bagpipes and drums, then by member representatives of the Scottish Rite, various Blue Lodge representatives, some York Rite representatives, followed by the Arabia Shriner's Oriental Band. The public is invited and all Masons are encouraged to wear their aprons and all other appropriate Masonic Regalia.

A few words will spoken about the Masonic Temple Building about the history and circumstances that have brought everyone together. All are invited to enter the building and observe the time capsule removed by a member of the Tellepsen family, brought down to the main room where various guests will then make shorts comments. The time capsule will then be opened and its contents removed for public viewing.

This year, the Tellepsen family is celebrating the 100 years anniversary of the company's founding. It is no coincidence that the new Tellepsen Company logo is a cornerstone with the Tellepsen "T" on it and their slogan is "The Cornerstone of the Community".

The Tellepsen family, in partnership with The Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation, wants to revive the traditional Masonic cornerstone laying ceremony for its new building projects. The Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation is now working to obtain the authorization from the Grand Lodge of Texas to organize a cornerstone laying team which will, for its first cornerstone laying event, lay the cornerstone for the new Tellepsen YMCA building in downtown Houston October 20th, 2009. The public and all Masons are encouraged to be a part of this historic event.

In honor of the Tellepsen family's longtime contribution and service to the Houston community, 100 years in fact, the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation's Annual Charity Gala will be held Thursday, November 12th, 2009, in the Texas Room of the Houston Club. Our Guests of Honor are the Tellepsen family and the theme will be "Hands Across the Ages". Come enjoy an evening of historical import and vibrant support of the Tellepsen family as we recognize the "Reviving of the Cornerstone Tradition".

I will leave you with this thought -

"Take from the altars of the past the fire - not the ashes." ~Jean Jaures

Please join us at 10:00 a.m. for the September 8th, Masonic Temple Building Cornerstone Time-Capsule Event, on October 20th, 2009 for the Tellepsen YMCA Masonic Cornerstone laying ceremony, and again on November 12th, 2009, at the Houston Club for a Gala honoring the Tellepsen family and Auction benefiting the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation.

For additional information on any of the Cornerstone or other Houston Masonic Library and Museum Teams, please contact us through the website; www.houstonmasoniclibrary.org or; Paul Anderson (andersonp@comcast.net / 713.835.0478) or Randon Reaves (randon@randon.com / 713.410.6010).

With enthusiastic regards,

Randon Reaves

Chairman Houston Masonic Library & Museum Foundation
A 501(c)3 Organization