

Henry Andrew Francken & His Masonic Manuscripts

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This paper was the closing plenary address at the World Conference on Freemasonry, Fraternalism, and History held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France May 29–30, 2015. It summarizes the findings of a panel of researchers who examined three of the known Francken Manuscripts at the Grand Orient de France May 27–28 before the conference. This article will be published in the spring 2016 issue of Ritual, Secrecy, and Civil Society and is used with their permission.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO CHAIR THIS SESSION BECAUSE I AM AN AMATEUR—in the basic sense of the word, I am a lover of the subject. For at least twenty-five years I have been studying and tracking the manuscripts prepared by Henry Andrew Francken. It has been a dream of mine that all known copies of Francken’s manuscripts could be brought together to be studied. Pierre Moliere, Librarian of the Grand Orient de France, has taken this dream a step farther by arranging with the Bibliothèque National de France to borrow the “Santo Domingo Manuscript” (Baylot FM⁴ 15). The Santo Domingo Manuscript is a French collection of rituals that is a near if not direct relative of Francken’s manuscripts.

It is somewhat frightening to be thrust into this position. My formal background is in theoretical mathematics and computer algorithms, little connected to reality, and certainly nothing as real as paper, watermarks, ink, handwriting, and so on. Nonetheless, I volunteered and so here we are. (Perhaps more correctly, Paul Rich said to me, “Brent, you’ve been talking about the Francken Manuscripts for years. Here’s your chance to do something other than talk. Put up or shut up!”)

I’ll begin by giving a brief overview of Francken and what was known about his manuscripts before the World Conference on Fraternalism, Freemasonry, and History. Then we’ll talk about our study procedure and what we accomplished.

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The largest and most widely dispersed system of high-degree Masonry is the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of thirty-three degrees. It originated in 1801 in Charleston, South Carolina, based upon the Order of the Royal Secret of twenty-five degrees (often called the Rite of Perfection).¹ Unlike some high-degree systems, the Ancient and Accepted Rite has a definite date of birth and well-known founders. Its parent, however, has a more shadowy genealogy. The Order of the Royal Secret seems to have appeared with Estienne Morin when he arrived in Santo Domingo in 1763, but its rituals and ceremonies are well-known.

Soon after his arrival Morin set about establishing high-degree bodies and himself as the high-degree authority of the western hemisphere (or at least the Caribbean). Sometime between 1763 and 1767, Morin appointed Henry Andrew Francken, a naturalized British citizen and resident of Jamaica, “Deputy Inspector General of all the Superior Degrees of Free and Accepted Masons in the West Indies.”² It was Francken who first brought the Order to the British colonies of North America and also appointed other Deputy Inspectors who propagated the rite. He thus prepared the way for the birth of the Scottish Rite.

At least as important as spreading the Royal Secret, Francken preserved its rituals by translating them from French into English and making at least four copies. The Scottish Rite thus has, in addition to a definite birthday and well-known founders, detailed rituals from its origins. There have been many subsequent changes and alterations to the rituals of the Scottish Rite by various

1. The system has most often been called the “Rite of Perfection.” Alain Bernheim clearly showed that its proper name is “Order of the Royal Secret.”

2. A. R. Hewitt, “Another Francken Manuscript Rediscovered,” *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 89 (1976): 208.

Supreme Councils, but they all can be measured against those of the Order of the Royal Secret and the foundational work of Henry Andrew Francken.

Much more is known about the life of Francken than that of Morin. Francken was born in 1720 and arrived in Jamaica in February 1757. Just over a year later, on March 2, 1758, he became a naturalized British citizen. A 1762 petition to the Vice-Admiralty Court shows Francken had been an appraiser, a marshal, and sergeant-at-mace in the court.³ In 1763, Estienne Morin passed through Jamaica on his way to Santo Domingo and had his first opportunity to meet Francken.⁴ Francken's wife, Elizabeth, died in 1764, and in 1765 he was appointed interpreter for Dutch and English for the Vice-Admiralty Court. From these linguistic skills, we can infer he was born in Holland⁵ or perhaps a Dutch colony. As a professional translator, it's easy to see how he came to translate and transcribe the rituals of the Order of the Royal Secret.

After being appointed court interpreter in 1765 and with the permission of Lieutenant Governor Moore, Francken traveled to Albany, New York and New York City, both with Dutch-speaking populations. He married Johanna Low of Newark, New Jersey,⁶ and on December 8, 1765, they became the godparents of Johanna Low, daughter of Nicholas and Sarah Low (Johanna's sister).⁷ In 1768, he formed Ineffable Lodge of Perfection at Albany, New York, and it opened on January 11. The records of the Ineffable Lodge of Perfection indicate that it ceased activity on December 5, 1774.⁸ Also in 1768, he made Moses Michael Hays a Deputy Inspector and Knight Kadosh with the power to constitute Grand Chapters of Knights of the Sun and of Kadosh in the West Indies and North America.⁹

Francken was one of two deputies specifically named a founding member of a grand chapter of Princes of the Royal Secret by Estienne Morin in Kingston, April 30, 1770.¹⁰ In 1771, four to eight years after meeting Morin, he produced

3. Richardson Wright, "Freemasonry on the Island of Jamaica," *Transactions of the American Lodge of Research* 3 (1) (1938–39): 126–61.

4. A[lain] B[ernheim], "Francken, Henry Andrew," <http://www.vrijmetselaarsgilde.eu/Maconnieke%20Encyclopedie/Franc-M/fra-f-02.htm#fransF-14>.

5. Wright, "Jamaica."

6. Wright, "Jamaica."

7. According to the records of the Dutch Reformed Church, NYC, <http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Francken-12> (accessed May 20, 2015).

8. "Scottish Rite," en.wikipedia.org (accessed May 24, 2015).

9. Bernheim, "Francken."

10. Bernheim, "Francken."

his earliest known dated book of constitutions and rituals for the 15–25°. This manuscript was rediscovered in 1976 and is now in the possession of the Supreme Council for England and Wales. Its spine was marked “Manuscript Ritual of the late Colonel Graham of Claverhouse,” and a note says the manuscript once belonged to a Captain Graham of Drynie(?) and Claverhouse who, after a period in the West Indies, returned to Scotland.¹¹ It suffered the indignity of the 25° being cut out shortly after arriving in the Supreme Council, and it suffered near destruction when submerged in water for over six months when the bank vault in which it was stored flooded.

Francken’s second wife, Johanna, died in 1777, and in 1782 he was appointed Master of the Revels. This was a largely ceremonial post that “gave him authority over all theatrical performances and the balls and entertainments given by the governor.” It also had an annual stipend of 100 guineas.¹² As late as 1783 he was still the official Dutch interpreter for the island,¹³ and in that year he was appointed a customs inspector.¹⁴

Of greater Masonic interest in 1783, Francken prepared another manuscript with rituals 4–25° for Deputy Inspector David Small.¹⁵ It was forgotten until 1855 when according to a note in the London *Freemasons’ Magazine* it came into the possession of an unnamed English brother. It was purchased the next year by Enoch Terry Carson of Ohio, a prominent American Mason, and subsequently purchased by Samuel Crocker Lawrence of Massachusetts, upon whose death in 1911 it went to the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. This version was rediscovered in 1935 in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts and given to the Supreme Council, 33°, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction.¹⁶

Francken prepared at least two other ritual manuscripts, but they did not contain details to let us date them. A third manuscript in Francken’s hand with the rituals 4–25° was found in the archives of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Lancashire in Liverpool around 1984 and is on loan to the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) library. “On the verso of the first unnumbered folio is the inscription, ‘Received from John Caird, Edinburgh—Jas. Caird, Liverpool 30th August 1815.’ This is surrounded by a lengthy note by one M. A.

11. Hewitt, “Another Francken Manuscript,” 208, 209.

12. Wright, “Jamaica.”

13. Wright, “Jamaica.”

14. Bernheim, “Francken.”

15. Hewitt, “Another Francken Manuscript,” 208.

16. Hewitt, “Another Francken Manuscript,” 208.

Gage recording that on the same date it was given to him by Jas. Caird. . . . He removed to Liverpool in 1811. . . . Reference to 1786 in the text provides evidence of an ‘earliest possible date.’”¹⁷

A fourth undated manuscript by Francken with rituals 4–24° was given by H. J. Whymper to the District Grand Lodge of the Punjab. It is now in the possession of Naveed Ahmed of Lahore, Pakistan. Little has been published about this version. The UGLE library microfilmed it decades ago and catalogued it as “Rite of Twenty-Five Degrees” but without an author. Thus, it remained camouflaged from researchers using the search term “Francken,” but it was rediscovered about 2010.

In 1790, Francken lost his post as customs inspector and requested financial aid from the government, having lost his job, been twice widowed, and having house twice destroyed by hurricanes. He was twice given £100.¹⁸ In 1793, he was again appointed Master of the Revels, and in 1794, he was appointed Assistant Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Port Royal and prepared his will. His will contained these instructions: “It is my positive will that my funeral expenses shall not exceed the sum of £20 currency; my coffin to be made of plain deal without any lining on the inside and only blackened outside; to be put into my Coffin in the Cloaths I shall die in and my body not to be washed, and to be carried to the grave without being carried in the Church.”¹⁹

Henry Andrew Francken died on May 20, 1795, survived by his son Parker Bennett Francken of St. Kitts, his daughter, Mary Long Goutris, and his granddaughter, Elizabeth Goutris. He was buried on May 24 in Kingston Parish Churchyard.²⁰

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This then is a brief summary of what we knew about Henry Andrew Francken and his manuscripts. What did we hope to discover over the two days that we had to study these documents? Perhaps little or perhaps much—it depended on the gods of research. I think I can say that we made progress without being overly effusive.

Let me give you an example of what we looked for when examining the manuscripts. In 1997, while studying the 1783 manuscript at the library of the

17. John M. Hamill, “A Third *Francken* MS of the Rite of Perfection,” *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 97 (1984): 200.

18. Bernheim, “Francken.”

19. Wright, “Jamaica.”

20. Wright, “Jamaica.”

Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, United States, I discovered that several of the pages facing the start of a degree show unusual ghost images from extra pages that were inserted between the pages. These extra inserted pages had drawings of tracing boards and remained undisturbed between the pages long enough for their images to transfer onto the facing page. Alain Marchiset, an antique book dealer who joined in our studies, estimates that it would take at least three to six months for the ink from the tracing boards to burn into the facing pages. In some cases, the acid in the paper of the extra pages has caused large rectangular stains. There are at least nine such ghost images of tracing boards, and there may be more, but some technology other than the naked eye and ordinary light are required. As it turned out, no ghost images were found in any other version. They are unique to the 1783 Francken.

While I had hoped we would find something as dramatic as ghost images, I decided we would be satisfied if we could leave with intelligent questions. It was probably hoping for too much to think we could leave this conference with exciting new discoveries, but sometimes exciting questions are almost as good. Keep in mind that not all attendees agreed with every finding or not as strongly as everyone else. Thus what I will present are consensus results.

- The 1771 Francken is in a different hand from the other manuscripts. It is also not signed by Henry Andrew Francken. Most thought it was created by a different writer, but there was a strong dissent that it may indeed have been written by Francken but with altered writing, perhaps due to stress or trauma. If it is by a different hand, then it is like the “Jamaica Manuscript,” a copy of a Francken by a different writer. (The Jamaica Manuscript is a contemporary ritual manuscript that was reprinted earlier this year by the Scottish Rite Research Society and purchase details are on their web page.)
- The 1783, West Lancashire, and Ahmed manuscripts are the same size with the same number of pages. The 1783 and Ahmed manuscripts have similar bindings. England and Wales was dis-bound as part of the conservation work after it was submerged, but Susan Snell will compare the preserved binding with that of West Lancashire.
- The watermark on the paper of the Ahmed and West Lancashire manuscripts bear “G R” for “Georgius Rex.” Susan Snell believes the watermark and common size and binding indicate these being common U.K. record books for use by courts and civil servants. Naveed Ahmed believes the paper and blank books were used by George III for his library. Susan will check the

British and Jamaican government libraries for similar books with government records from the period.

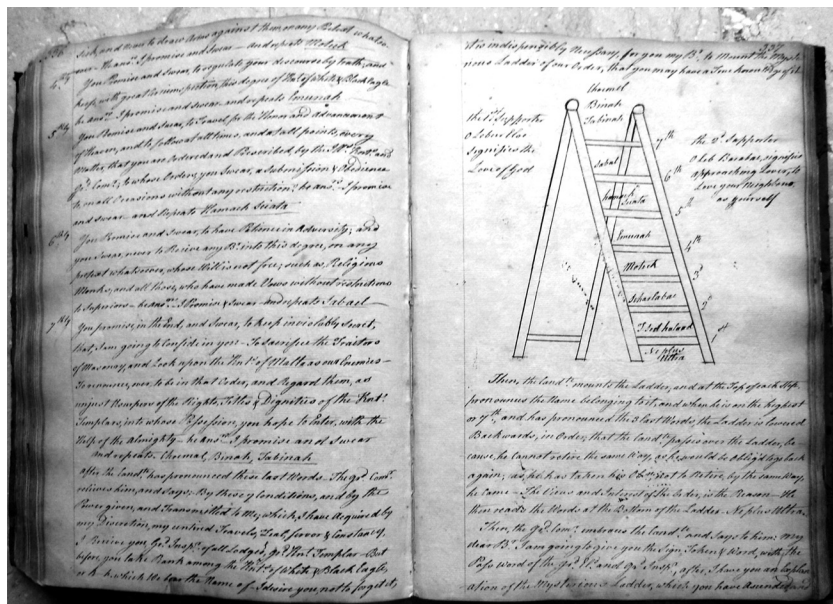
- There is at least one missing intermediate text. As one example, the Santo Domingo Manuscript is written in French, and the ritual for the Knight of the Sun is written in the center of the page with dense additions in both margins. The Francken manuscripts have these two pieces of writing smoothly integrated together. There are many small variations in language in the Francken manuscripts that lead Alain Marchiset to conclude that Francken translated each copy from a French mother document that represents the merged texts of the Santo Domingo.
- In the 22^o, Prince of Libanus, each manuscript has a paragraph that begins “This celebrated nation. . . .” However, the Ahmed manuscript, one of the oldest, was written without the word “celebrated,” which was inserted later. This leads us to conclude it is not the English mother for the others, but reinforces our belief there is a French mother.

The United States had several lodges of perfection in east coast port cities: Charleston, SC; Philadelphia, PA; Newport, RI; Albany, NY; and others, yet none of them are known to have a copy of the Francken manuscript. It appears that Francken prepared and most likely sold these manuscripts to British Officers, as all the books made their way back to Britain with most coming through Scotland; they were not given to east-coast Lodges of Perfection. We know that Francken was in difficult financial straits when he petitioned the Jamaican government for relief in 1790. Perhaps he supplemented his income with his skills as a professional scrivener, using blank books from the Jamaican court’s supply cabinet, and selling the fruits of his labors to British officers. This would explain the absence, thus far, in the archives of American Lodges of Perfection and the apparent travels to Great Britain via army officers.

All agreed there are most likely other undiscovered copies made by Francken or copies of Francken made by other writers in archives around the world. To support this contention, Paul Ninin wrote to me yesterday afternoon—twenty-four hours ago—to say there are two Francken manuscripts in The Hague in the possession of the Latomia Foundation and the Supreme Council for the Netherlands.²¹ Of course, we must compare the handwrit-

21. Subsequent research indicates the Latomia images are those of the manuscript from the Supreme Council for England and Wales.

ing, paper, binding, and text. There will indeed be more to report at the next World Conference!



Pages from the Ahmed Francken Manuscript showing the Ladder of Kadosh from the 24^o, “Gr^d El^d Knt^s of the White & Black Eagle—Formerly Called Kadoch.”