This year marks the ninetieth year of Rosicrucian Park as the focus of Rosicrucian activity in North America and around the world. The word, focus, is a most apt description since, in the households of ancient Rome, the hearth (focus in Latin) was the center of the home. Sacred to the goddess Vesta, whose virtues had defined the sanctity, purity, and harmony of the ideal Roman family, the hearth provided warmth and light, and it was the place where nourishment was prepared. In so many ways, Rosicrucian Park has served the Rosicrucian Order and the San Jose community in these very capacities.

The Supreme Temple at Rosicrucian Park1, dedicated on July 17, 1949, was made possible by the generous donations of Rosicrucians from all walks of life. From that moment, it has embodied the very soul of Rosicrucian work and worship. It was a dream of H. Spencer Lewis to erect a temple that could accommodate all those who might wish to attend Convocations and participate in all aspects of Rosicrucian spiritual life. Construction began when the material shortages and rationing following World War II had come to an end. Today, it is home to the ritual life of the English Grand Lodge for the Americas. Devoted Rosicrucians flock from around the world to visit this magnificent temple and, if possible, take their initiations within this vibrant sacred space.

The Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, dedicated on November 26, 1966, is a living center of instruction and inspiration for Rosicrucian students, school children on tours, and perennial students from all walks of life. Special exhibits, tours, lectures, workshops, and salons provide a kaleidoscopic exposure to the cultural and ethical development of Humanity.

Since 1938, the Rosicrucian Research Library has served the research needs of those who hunger for greater understanding of the arts, sciences, philosophy, and other more arcane subjects. Herein is found an amazing repository of resource material ranging from rare, beautifully bound first editions to scrolls and videos. The Library Staff gladly locate specific articles and reference works to assist your research needs.

The beautiful grounds of Rosicrucian Park provide an oasis of serenity in the midst of the frantic bustle of Silicon Valley. In the early days of pioneer settlement of Santa Clara Valley, it was known as the “Valley of Heart’s Delight,” and perhaps a portion of that magical place is preserved here for the pilgrim in need of the spiritual refreshment that these beautiful surroundings can provide.

There are other resources at Rosicrucian Park that are absolutely vital and, at times, all too invisible. These are the volunteers and the donors. Stand in the middle of the Park and look about you; if it were not for the service and support of legions of these unselfish benefactors from 1927 to the present, a very different, subdivided scene might greet your eyes. The very earth beneath your feet, the statuary, much of the landscaping, and the striking architecture are all to some degree the result of generous acts of service, donations, and bequests.

The artistry and craftsmanship of Rosicrucian members greet the eye wherever you turn your gaze in the Park. The stately sphinxes and the evocative sculpture “Coming and Going” by Frater

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David Cherveny, FRC
Erwin Winterholder, Swiss artist and Rosicrucian, occupy special niches in the imagination of all those who have viewed these works of art. In designing the stunning murals for the Grand Temple, Soror Diana Bovee Salyer, a former Los Angeles County Museum staff artist, fulfilled a unique volunteer opportunity. When construction of the Temple interior had been finished, the mural designs were scaled to the dimensions of the interior walls of the Temple, the outlines were applied, and many talented Rosicrucian volunteers participated directly in the coloration and decoration of this sacred place. What began in 1927 continues to evolve and attract the attention, energy, and efforts of those devoted to Rosicrucian principles.

**Building AMORC**

**The Park Evolves**

In its infancy, Rosicrucian Park consisted of a single lot that H. Spencer Lewis had no compunction about designating “Rosicrucian Park.” According to the anecdotes of Frater Harvey Miles, Grand Secretary at the time when H. Spencer Lewis was asked how he could call a single lot a “Park”, he would reply, “Because that is the way I see it will be in the future.” It was indeed amazing that the portion of the block that had been acquired by the Order for accommodating both the original AMORC Administration Building and the Supreme Temple was
owned free and clear by the end of 1929! October of that year saw the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression.

It is humbling to contemplate what was accomplished at Rosicrucian Park in the depths of such devastating economic hardship. Consider the following: As more of the city block was purchased, Francis Bacon Auditorium (the largest in San Jose for many years) was dedicated in 1931, followed by the original Rosicrucian Egyptian and Oriental Museum in 1932, Rose-Croix University in 1934, the Planetarium in 1936, the Rose-Croix Research Institute and Clinic in 1938, and the Research Library in 1939. Great public projects had been undertaken at that time under the aegis of the federal government, but for a relatively small organization such as AMORC to erect several monumental structures was just short of miraculous.

The opportunity to contribute to the works at the Park and to have one’s contribution acknowledged, no matter how modest, gave members a sense of partnership not only in the construction of new buildings, but a sense of participation in the Great Work. The charitable organization of the Order at that time, the Kepher-Ra Club, assisted local families in need, thus forging a link with the community that would take on many other forms. The outreach program of the AMORC Sunshine Circle included part of the Navajo Nation that was then ineligible for government assistance, and the efforts of AMORC enabled Navajo children to attend school.

Imagine for a moment that you are living in San Jose in the mid-1930s and raising a family. The necessities of life are hard to come by and luxuries are non-existent. Yet, perhaps within walking distance, there is a free museum, planetarium, and an auditorium where interesting lectures and musical or dramatic offerings are regular events. These programs will enrich the memories and imaginations of your children for a lifetime. The setting for these cultural events is a park where you can escape for a while from the hardships of the mundane world and perhaps find a peace of mind that helps you to continue on. The value of such a community center is inestimable.

From the beginning of Frater Lewis’s work under the auspices of the Rose Cross, Egypt had loomed large for many reasons. At the first headquarters of the Order in New York City in 1915, he had used Egyptian motifs and designs in the interiors, and began to collect artifacts from “the Orient” through the generosity of members. These were used appropriately throughout the buildings and this continued to be the case as the headquarters of the Order moved from New York City to San Francisco in 1919. In 1921, the Imperator was contacted by the Egypt Exploration Society of Boston, soliciting support for the work of the Society and especially their expeditions to Tell el-Amarna, site of Pharaoh Akhnaton’s sacred city. Frater Lewis enthusiastically supported their work on behalf of the members of the Order.

Francis Bacon Auditorium in the 1930s.
and, as a result, garnered a significant portion of the support of the Society for the project.

In gratitude, the Egypt Exploration Society of Boston donated several artifacts from their finds, and these artifacts became the nucleus of the collection of the Order. Frater Lewis gratefully created display cases, both in his residence and outside his office in the San Francisco headquarters of the Order to display these treasures, and judiciously and eagerly began to add to this incipient Egyptian collection through his own purchases and the donations from members and friends.2

For several years, Frater Lewis had a small image of the goddess Sekhmet on his desk, which was at that time the only artifact in the “collection.” When asked by visitors what it was, the Imperator would reply, “This is the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum!” This tiny 5.5-inch (13.9-cm) artifact now proudly bears the catalog number “RC 1,” the first artifact in the largest collection of authentic ancient Egyptian artifacts in western North America.

On the Air

In its earliest days, Rosicrucian Park boasted two ninety-foot radio towers. The AMORC station call letters were 6KZ, and broadcasting began on February 15, 1928. Imperator H. Spencer Lewis, who was an innovator in this burgeoning field of communication, presented regularly scheduled broadcasts, including programs of live musical performances. In the early 1930s, young radio aficionados who had nowhere to meet and discuss the exciting new technology found a haven at the studio in the Administration Building of Rosicrucian Park. Rosicrucian programming was also aired on the very powerful Los Angeles station KNX. This station caught the attention of future members throughout California, the Southwest, and the Pacific Northwest. When H. Spencer Lewis’s son, Ralph, was elected to succeed him, he continued to keep Rosicrucian and community programming on the air. Even after the removal of the station and the towers at the Park, San Jose radio station KEEN broadcast local talent contests from Francis Bacon Auditorium of Rosicrucian Park. The AMORC policy of using available technology to advantage has continued throughout the history of the Park.

The Spirit of the Park

There has been a nearly tangible force of spirit at work in Rosicrucian Park from its very beginning. In an address entitled “H. Spencer Lewis, the Man,” delivered to those attending the 1957 Rosicrucian Rally at Saint Pancras Town Hall in London, England, Frater Peter Falcone brought to life images of the early days of Rosicrucian Park with touching, intimate recollections. The events recounted are a vivid portrayal of the late Imperator’s passion for members who would drop by after work several times a week to assist Frater Lewis in assembling what would become the first American-built planetarium equipment in the United States, to be housed in the new planetarium at Rosicrucian Park.

As related by Frater Falcone, the evening continued into the wee hours of the morning with no sense of fatigue felt by any of the participants.

Another mid-1930s reminiscence tells of Frater Lewis announcing to his companions that they would comprise an orchestra to entertain the membership
at an upcoming Rosicrucian convention. It did not deter Frater Lewis in the least that he was the only accomplished musician among the lot. To aid Frater Falcone in playing the bass violin (an instrument Frater Falcone knew nothing about!), Frater Lewis reduced the notation and the fingerings to the corresponding mathematical essences and proceeded to make numbered chalk marks on the fret board of the bass, indicating which of his fingers the numbers represented. There were only three rehearsals before the performance at the opening of the Rosicrucian Convention that year, and yet through Frater Lewis’s genius, the limited program was well performed and the music warmly received.

The spirit that had continued in the Park after the transition of H. Spencer Lewis was embodied in the accomplishments of his son, Imperator Ralph M. Lewis. Rose-Croix University and the Research Library had reached new levels of eminence and excellence. The next paragraph describes the evolution of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum into a world-class institution during Ralph M. Lewis’s tenure.

It took decades, but Ralph Lewis’s continuation of his father’s dream was finally realized in November, 1966, as the doors opened to the largest display of Egyptian artifacts in western North America, and the only such museum on the planet architecturally designed in the Egyptian revival style, and situated in an Egyptian-style park. Even the moving of the artifacts was personally and lovingly supervised by the Imperator.3

“The Reaching the Roof”

In a 1930s Rosicrucian Digest article entitled “Reaching the Roof,” H. Spencer Lewis declared his views on success and achievement. There was no miniature scale dimension to Frater Lewis’s plan for the Rosicrucian Order or for Rosicrucian Park. The opening paragraphs of the article explain the derivation of the title:

Not long ago a contractor started to build a home in the suburbs of this city, and I was interested in watching the care with which he constructed the foundation. It appeared to me that a very fine and attractive home was to be built on the concrete walls, which he planned and constructed so carefully.

Shortly thereafter I met the contractor at a luncheon and asked him how his new house was progressing, and was astonished to hear him say that he was just completing the roof. “Why,” said I, “you have reached the roof very quickly.”

“Yes,” replied the contractor, “you know when some persons build, they plan a roof that is very close to the ground and it does not take much time or much effort to build up from the foundation to the roof.”4

If you’ve already guessed that Frater Lewis was among those whose roofs are never near the ground but so far above the ground, let his words – again from “Reaching the Roof” – confirm your supposition.

I allowed my mentally-created structure to tower into the skies to enormous heights and I raised the roof of the structure so high that from where I stood in the picture I could not see where it was nor what it looked like. In fact, I never felt sure that there was a roof
upon this mental structure or that a roof was even necessary, for it seemed to me that the only thing to consider was the making of the foundation so strong and the walls so supported, that story after story could be added to the building in its rising heights without limit and without fear of collapse or weakness.5

This unlimited visionary approach has been the driving and sustaining force animating Rosicrucian Park for the last ninety years. The principle of visualizing and still keeping oneself open to the inspirational touch of the hand of the Cosmic is in fact an exercise in humility. It could be expressed as cultivating the patience necessary to avoid reaching our roof too soon.

Good painting instructors advise the novice to resolve details slowly and patiently, thus allowing intuition and inspiration to play their part in the creative process. H. Spencer Lewis’s oil paintings and watercolors, still to be found at the Park, testify not only to his ability as a painter, but also serve to demonstrate what can be accomplished when we believe not only in ourselves, but in something greater.

When Ralph M. Lewis became Imperator after the transition of his amazing father in 1939, this unlimited perspective was perpetuated and the further evolution of Rosicrucian Park continued. An erudite and articulate mystic, Ralph Lewis had increased the wealth of Rosicrucian literature and profoundly enhanced the landscape of Rosicrucian Park. During Ralph Lewis’s tenure, his father’s hope to construct a new Supreme Temple was realized in 1949, and a much-expanded Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum as we know it today became a reality in 1966.

Rebuilding AMORC
The War Years and After

The war years at Rosicrucian Park were a time of intense activity. The massive rush to enlist in the Armed Services had created a diminished work force nationwide. In response to this circumstance, Supreme Grand Lodge officers at the Park picked up brooms, mops, and gardening tools to keep the buildings and grounds in apple-pie order for the duration. To allow any deterioration of the premises would have been a kind of a defeat and a disservice to those who looked to this oasis as their spiritual home. Activities and programs continued at Rosicrucian Park despite the irregularities imposed by the war on American society.

Rosicrucian Convocations and Initiations were held throughout World War II, and the Order continued producing the full complement of monographs, books, and magazines for distribution to Rosicrucian students at home and in the trenches (although the thinness of the Rosicrucian Digest’s paper in the 1945 issue attests to rigorous wartime paper rationing). Conventions and Rose-Croix University International courses (known as RCU in those days) continued to be held at the Park. In a preface to the 1944 edition of Hieroglyphs, the RCU yearbook, Frater Cecil Poole wrote the following:

If we want to be successful in meeting the challenge of a complex environment, such as exists today, we find it increasingly necessary to draw not only on our own experience, but upon the experience of those about us and those who have preceded us.6

Opportunities to put such exchanges of experience into action did indeed present themselves.
Clockwise from top left: A serviceman and his companion view the Science Museum’s Foucault Pendulum, 1940s; Star-struck youngsters eagerly anticipate the Planetarium’s next “Theater of the Sky” shows, early 1950s; Frater Erwin Watermeyer’s RCU Physics class, 1940s; The seismograph in the Planetarium’s Science Museum recorded California’s frequent earthquakes, 1950s.
During the war years, numerous fratres and sorores in military service had come through the San Francisco Bay Area, and others had been stationed at nearby bases, affording them the opportunity to visit Rosicrucian Park and attend RCU. One Rosicrucian Convention during those years included a special forum that focused on members in military service. These Rosicrucian students were able to relate how their studies were enabling them to adjust and to be flexible in dealing with the harsh realities of wartime military service.

Throughout the Rosicrucian Order, there was a consciousness of the necessity to serve those serving our nation. In Los Angeles, the AMORC Hermes Lodge had made its library and social room available for twelve hours each day to Rosicrucian servicemen and servicewomen and their friends, providing a warm welcome and refuge from the exigencies of military life.

Even before the end of World War II, appeals for Imperator Ralph M. Lewis’s presence in Europe had made their way to Rosicrucian Park via the underground. Rosicrucian officers from the Continent had greatly desired the rebuilding of the Order following years of devastation. Considering the extremely sensitive and restrictive nature of communications among mystics in such perilous times where stray information could be a matter of life or death, it is very significant that these messages were given priority. After all, the Rosicrucian Order and its teachings did not find favor in the eyes of the fascist regimes. In Europe, literature and properties belonging to the Order had been destroyed as casualties of war or as intentional targets of repressive rule. Anticipating a time when the light of Rosicrucian learning could again burn more brightly, those courageous European fratres and sorores – the caretakers of the Order on the Continent – took the risk of contacting the Imperator in the only way possible.

In the spring of 1945, Imperator Lewis attended the World Security Conference, convened at the War Memorial Opera House on Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco. This conference of leaders from around the world gave birth to the United Nations. The war in Europe ended May 7, 1945, and the Imperator immediately began making arrangements and “doing battle” with all the multinational red tape that a trip to post-war Europe would entail. In the summer of 1946, the journey to Europe was finally possible. A heartwarming reunion in Paris with the European Legate, Soror Jeanne Guesdon, preceded the F.U.D.O.S.I. Conclave in Brussels. (F.U.D.O.S.I., in French, Fédération Universelle des Ordres et Sociétés Initiatiques, or in Latin, Federatio Universalis Dirigens Ordines Societatesque Initiationis, was a federation of Rosicrucian and other mystical orders dedicated to perpetuating the initiatic traditions.) In her book, Great Women Initiates, Soror Hélèn Bernard recounts more events from the remarkable life of Mademoiselle Guesdon. Meetings with officers of several European
jurisdictions followed, and the groundwork for European reestablishment was begun. On the home front, a tremendous relief effort on the part of AMORC affiliated bodies across America went into full swing to assist Rosicrucians in Europe and in the Pacific region.

Another very visible contributor to the Park as we know it today was architect Frater Earle C. Lewis, the talented brother of Imperator Ralph Lewis. Earle had served as architect for the Supreme Temple, the AMORC Administration Building, the Research Library, and the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum. His powerful, monumental designs give the Park its visual cohesion, a vital element of esthetic unity. He was also, for many years, the painting and sculpture instructor for RCU. Even if one was not to achieve the master painter level of a da Vinci, a Cassatt, or a Monet (at least in this incarnation), a profound understanding and appreciation of the creative process was imparted to every student who was fortunate enough to participate in one of his classes. Frater Lewis held his painting classes in the open air, with the Park as part of the visual inspiration for his students — yet another inspiring role the Park has played.

During his tenure as Imperator, Ralph M. Lewis was also responsible for a monument of a different kind. He had crafted a body of literature that is outstanding in the history of mysticism. With unequaled clarity, he defined the concept of “Rational Mystic” for the twentieth century and perhaps for all time. The Sanctuary of Self, Through the Mind’s Eye, and The Conscious Interlude are but a few selections of the scholarly, yet never pedantic works that comprise the legacy that he bequeathed to Humanity. These works resonate with the mathematician and the physicist, as well as with the Hermeticist. The necessity for humility is imparted in terms that are practical. A palpable sense of reverence for the Divine permeates these works that at first might seem an incongruity in such a rational format. Upon reflection, this makes perfect sense. Imperator Lewis had lived through several periods of occult and mystical resurgence. Some of the practices advocated during these times of revival were at best questionable, and at worst harmful. Maintaining objectivity in one’s studies was a tradition of Rosicrucian study that Frater Lewis felt could not be overemphasized, and nearly all his books, articles, and discourses make reference to this vital approach to enlightenment.

Frater Lewis communicated clearly and succinctly, an all too rare quality in a mystic, and his recorded discourses reveal a profound love of sharing what he had learned. His capacity for clear, compelling analogy was vast. The following excerpt gives a simple, yet powerful, clarification of the difference between knowledge and wisdom:

All knowledge does not stand the test of time. True wisdom does. It is sagacious in meeting circumstances and applying what is known in the right manner. Time proves or disproves decisions that people make. The knowledge that survives and continues to be applicable when called upon is Wisdom.7

It is humbling and inspiring to recall while relaxing on a bench in Rosicrucian Park that such powerful literature was composed in this amazing setting.

**The Mysterious Mummy**

In 1971, a landmark event took place at the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum when an unexpected visitor came to stay: A mummy case had been purchased as part of the on-going acquisitions, and the supposedly empty case was found to
As yet unidentified, this mummy discovered in Usermontu’s coffin exhibits hallmarks of Nineteenth Dynasty mummification practices. Note the crossed arms and opened mouth. In the insert to the right, the pin joining the mummy’s femur and tibia demonstrates a sophisticated knowledge of joint articulation.

be occupied! This priceless find has been the subject of continuing investigation as to the actual identity of the mummy. This research continues today. In the course of these investigations, an X-ray examination revealed an iron pin in one leg, evidence of an ancient repair, although it is still not certain whether this repair had taken place after the transition of this person or is an example of ancient surgery.8

There is indeed a certain amount of mystery connected with the mummy found occupying the beautifully crafted coffin of the priest Usermontu, who lived in Thebes in the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (ca. 600 BCE). The story begins with the rescue of artifacts so that they might be properly conserved and displayed with the reverence due to human funerary relics. The 1971 Neiman-Marcus Christmas Catalog offered a pair of “His and Her” mummy cases. Usermontu’s case and its companion, a Ptolemaic period woman’s coffin, might have been destined for a decorative and relatively anonymous existence in an affluent Dallas suburb but for the quick action of a soror in Texas. She had contacted the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum and was instrumental in securing the purchase of the cases. When the mummy cases arrived from England, they went through Customs in Florida. X-rays revealed that Usermontu’s case was occupied! This complicated the Customs processing and involved the police, since it had to be established that the human remains were not the result of a crime. The antiquity of the ancient stowaway was established, and even if it had been a case of foul play, the likelihood of producing witnesses was remote. The mummy cases and the unsuspected traveler were released to the care of the Rosicrucian Egyptian
Even after more recent examinations of the mummy had been performed and the pin discovered, ongoing scrutiny indicates that the remains could conceivably be those of a resident of the Nineteenth Dynasty, 600 years earlier than originally suspected, thus making the presence of the metal pin even more astounding.

Step into the Museum for a moment and let your eyes adjust to the cooler light. Turn to the right, descend a short flight of stairs, and approach the case that contains the remains of this, as yet unidentified, time traveler. Notice the crossed arms with manicured hands displaying nails dyed with henna. The posture and the dye were particular features of the Nineteenth Dynasty and, as a rule, had been reserved for Royals. Based on criteria put forth in *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt*, by Aidan Dodson and Salima Ikram, former Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum Curator Lisa Schwappach matched eight out of ten potential conditions that were particular features of the Nineteenth Dynasty mummification practices. Behind you are two exquisite mummy cases of similar design. The male mummy case was the intended resting place of Usermontu, and the adjacent coffin was that of a kinswoman, probably a cousin. Her name was Ta’awa Ta-sherit. Charm and beauty still radiate from her masterfully carved portrait. Her coffin was acquired in 1980 from Sotheby’s, the international art auction house, thus effecting a long-delayed family reunion. The cases are of slightly different heights, yet the proportions, dimensions, and placement of carvings, as well as the similar palette of hand-produced colors, proclaim that these might be the work of a single workshop or artisan.

**Conventions Bring the World Together**

In August 1928, Rosicrucian Park hosted its first convention. More than twenty AMORC Conventions have been held at Rosicrucian Park and in San Jose since then. Conventions include presentations, workshops, opportunities for fellowship, and special convocations to raise the level of Rosicrucian activities throughout the world. The 1943 Rosicrucian Convention was attended by a strong representation of American and Allied military personnel. In that time of world strife, discussions and forums affirmed the value of the Rosicrucian teachings and principles as valuable means of dealing with challenging circumstances, and a renewed sense of dedication to the Order was forged while a deeper understanding of Rosicrucian purpose was conveyed to the community.
In 2004, the AMORC World Peace Conference was held in San Jose. More than 2,000 members from 70 nations around the world participated in this AMORC World Convention dedicated to Peace. Along with many other memorable moments during the convention, Imperator Christian Bernard dedicated the Rosicrucian Peace Garden – an educational garden authentic to the Eighteenth Dynasty of ancient Egypt.

In July 2010 hundreds of Rosicrucians and friends gathered at Rosicrucian Park for “Hidden in Plain Sight: The Influence of Western Esoteric Movements on Modern Thought,” a conference for scholars and practitioners sponsored by the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.

The 2015 AMORC World Convention was held at Rosicrucian Park, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. Thousands of members participated in this historic event, at which Imperator Christian Bernard opened the time capsule that H. Spencer Lewis had placed between the paws of the sphinx in front of the RCUI building in 1934. Imperator Bernard then placed a time capsule in this same location to be opened by a future generation of Rosicrucians.

To be continued…

Footnotes

1. Currently the Grand Temple.
3. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Poole, Cecil A., Hieroglyphs, Rose-Croix University, Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1944.