

# THE FIRST ROSICRUCIANS IN AMERICA

*Sri Ramatherio*

*In 1927, AMORC first published a booklet entitled, The Light of Egypt – The Strange Story of the Rosicrucians, by Sri Ramatherio (one of H. Spencer Lewis's pseudonyms). In this intriguing manuscript, the author relates the history of the Rosicrucians through a story told by a fictional character named Dr. Roberts, while he and guests at a dinner party wait for a rain storm to subside. Miss Fletcher, a missionary worker, is the questioner in the story. After exploring the publication of the Rosicrucian manifestos in the early 1600s and their impact on the Western world, Dr. Roberts explains the importance of applying the knowledge that the Rosicrucians perpetuate and reveals the history of the first Rosicrucians in America.*



the material—the transitory stage where success is assured in the plans or failure is inevitable.

“It was this sort of knowledge that the Rosicrucians offered so generously in the seventeenth century in Germany, and in other centuries before and after that time. The success of their plans, in aiding men and women to achieve their desires in life, brought them some fame, but more power. Before the end of the seventeenth century they were ready to carry their work to the New World, to America, in accordance with plans made long before Columbus ventured to explore the unknown seas.

“It was in 1693 that the leaders and eminent Rosicrucian workers of Europe gathered together and selected from their volunteers those proficient in the arts, sciences, trades, and professions, to go to America and establish the Great Work. That was one hundred and eight years after the new cycle had started in France. In their own boat and with proper ceremony they departed, and reached the shores of America in the early part of 1694.”

“Do you mean to say that the Rosicrucians have been in America all these years?” asked Johnson.

“Success in life means mastership, and mastership means utilizing every inner force and power of the being as well as every outer force. A person’s creative abilities do not rest in the muscular strength of his body, nor in his fertile imagination. He must be able to bring his mental imagining into material expression, daily, hourly; and to do this, he must be able to use other faculties than simple visualization of the imagination. He must not place all dependence on his or other hands to work out the concrete expression. He must be able to recreate things in that world of form which exists between the mental and

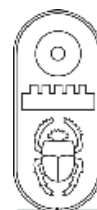
“Yes, and they were really a part of American history long before that. According to very dependable records a well-known Rosicrucian leader of Europe sailed with an early expedition from Spain and landed with the exploring party on the shores of California in 1602 or 1604, and there deposited a ‘Rosicrucian Stone.’ This means that he established some foundation, some principle of the work, in the name of the Order. There are a number of references to this fact in Rosicrucian writings. However, in 1694 the Rosicrucian colony arrived at what is now Philadelphia, and in Fairmount Park on Mystic Lane one can still see part of their first building. Their colony increased, their work progressed, and in a few years they moved to a quiet valley, built many structures, and established many of the first American institutions. You may be surprised to know what a valuable contribution they made to the founding of America. I do not have my note books at hand, but I can tell you what I have read in a book by Julius Sachse, the eminent Historian of the Grand Lodge of Freemasonry for Pennsylvania, and who was reputed to be a descendant of one of the families closely connected with the col-

ony. He quotes the records in the Pennsylvania Historical Society, and books and records in possession of former Governor Pennypacker of Pennsylvania and hundreds of other authorities. He shows that these early Rosicrucians established a really marvelous system of widespread brotherhood activities for the advancement of humankind’s inner and cultural development. To do this they utilized all the laws of nature and taught those laws. Here they created the first complete printing plant in America, and made their own paper in the first American paper mill. Out of this shop came the largest books ever made in America during those years, and books that had no other purpose than to reveal to men and women the laws of nature which would lift them out of the ruts. Not mystical books, not books of secret teachings, but unusual books. Even the first American Bible was published here, and the first Sunday School was established by them, sixteen years before one was established in England.”

“I thought you said they were not a religious school or cult?” asked Miss Fletcher, intent upon finding some support for her erroneous belief.



Above: The cloister at Ephrata, an early community.  
Inset: Model of the Amphitheater at Ephrata.





In his book, *The German Pietists of Pennsylvania* (1895), historian Julius Friedrich Sachse writes about the Rosicrucians who settled near Philadelphia in the late 1600s. The photograph above shows some of the books from their collection, including in the center—*Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*.

“Publishing a Bible and establishing a Sunday School would not make them a religious body. Remember that they found that most of the settlers in America came here for religious freedom. They catered to this, and kept free from all sectarianism, just as the Rosicrucians have in all ages. So, these first Rosicrucians in America helped to establish and dedicate several churches in Philadelphia, by furnishing the music for choirs and trained teachers as clergy people; they helped churches of six different denominations, and expressed no preferment. They even published the first Christian Testament produced in America, and the first religious magazine. All of this was the work of Brother Sauer, the master printer of the colony who had been selected abroad because of his knowledge. He also established the first American type foundry and finally produced the most beautiful books ever made in America during the eighteenth century.

“They also established mills for grinding corn, a factory for the making of organs, and actually made the first organs ever manufactured in America for church

use. Their chemists and biologists worked with their botanist, and the first botanical gardens were established for the purpose of preparing herbs and medicines for the most advanced medical practices. They were not mentalists to the extent that they placed a fanatical valuation on the power of mind, but gave rightful place to all the sciences, as do the Rosicrucians today.

“Just to show you the humanitarian activities of this colony, let me say that they established free schools for children, free clinics for the sick, and free systems for aiding everyone in improving the existing standard of living. All who wished to unite with the work were welcome to do so and all shared alike in the benefits and obligations.

“It was in the college rooms of this community that the Declaration of Independence was translated by a Rosicrucian into the several foreign languages so that all colonists could read it; and the famous document now preserved in Washington was engrossed by a Rosicrucian in that colony. It was here also that the first pro-



paganda for the freedom of the slaves was started, as is shown by the early records.”

“I thought it was commonly believed that Thomas Jefferson wrote or engrossed the Declaration of Independence?” remarked Johnson.

“It may be, since Jefferson was not only a member of the Rosicrucians but one of the later officers of the colony. All that the records show, however, is that it was engrossed in the editorial rooms of the community college. Other famous documents were prepared there, for they were constantly preparing manuscripts for future generations, and many of them are in existence today, showing skilled penmanship, lettering, and colored engrossing like those made by the Monks of ancient times.”

“What were these manuscripts about?” asked Mrs. Nathan, who had been silent through all the story.

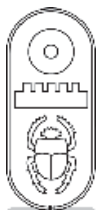
“They were private manuscripts of instruction, intended for the students of the Rosicrucian Order of that and future generations. I remember some of the titles, for we still use some of them—copies of course—in some of our lectures. There was one entitled *The Mystery of Numbers*. It revealed how the law of numbers, the law of averages, and the law of proportions, affect things in our lives. Such ideas have been established among learned men and women since then, but the multitude knows little about the subject. Another manuscript was entitled *Phisica, Metaphisica, and Hyperphisica*, and another deals with the ‘Non-ego.’”

“I had no idea that the modern subject of Metaphysics had such an early start in America,” remarked Johnson.

“That is just it. America today is being offered many systems of New Thought, Metaphysical, occult, and practical psychology courses of study, and they are offered as something new, something sur-

prising and astounding. The Rosicrucians have been teachers and demonstrators of these things for very many centuries, and have the only dependable system of personal development that humans can rely upon to awaken and make active their inner, latent faculties. But, the Rosicrucians have never sold this knowledge in books and have never conducted paid classes. They will not commercialize the knowledge which was given to them freely and which must be passed on just as freely.

“Many eminent characters in American history became members of the Rosicrucian colony. I could cite hundreds of names which all of you would recognize. There was Brother Rittenhouse, for instance, who established the Rosicrucian astronomical observatory at the colony. It was the first in America and soon became world famous, for it was Rittenhouse with his unusually large telescope, a Rosicrucian invention based upon principles laid down by the Rosicrucian, Roger Bacon, who placed America in the foreground of astronomical research. Rittenhouse made the first measurements of the distances between the planets – the Sun and Earth. Was that not scientific achievement? You could hardly call that the dreamy work of a mystical philosopher – and yet he was a philosopher, a Rosicrucian philosopher, which means one who is very practical and has no time for idle speculations. Thomas Jefferson, speaking of Rittenhouse’s wonderful discoveries of the distant sky which brought the heavens nearer to human-kind’s understanding, said: ‘He has not indeed made a world, but he has approached nearer to its Maker than any man who has lived from the time of the Creation to this day.’ Benjamin Franklin worked out his great library plan as an associate of the Rosicrucian library, and he also worked in the experimental laboratories of the colony, and became advanced in the principles of natural forces.



“Can anyone say that such education given to Franklin and used by him for further experiments did not benefit mankind as well as himself?

“And so the years passed. The eighteenth century ended, and the community of Rosicrucians consisted of many hundreds of families, with hundreds resting in their graves, in the graveyard which still exists, and hundreds away in other states and cities becoming leaders and masters in the arts, industries, and trades. Every large city in America at the close of the eighteenth century contained in its roster of eminent citizens and successful homes, many Rosicrucians – all happy men and women, prospering in their business affairs, mastering in their life problems, leading others in education and development, and maintaining the high standard for American progress.

“Then came the year 1801. It was just one hundred and eight years after the new cycle of the Rosicrucians for America. The year had come for the Rosicrucians to retire again into silence. One by one the buildings of the community were sold or abandoned, and the workers and leaders departed for other cities. Secret sessions were held twice yearly for many years until all the initiates then living had passed to the beyond, and their successors were instructed how to preserve the work and carry on in silence and seclusion. From time to time in important local or national crises, one of the most advanced of the silent workers would come forward and aid, in ways that only the Rosicrucians understood. Manuscripts were prepared and issued in secrecy, and hundreds of students of the work went to Europe to receive initiation into the Order in one of the active Jurisdictions.

“There as the period of one hundred and eight years of silence came to its close and the year 1909 approached, those who had been in preparation for the birth of

the new cycle of public activity made ready for the first steps. Thus, in 1909 many Americans offered their services to foreign branches of the Rosicrucian Order in establishing a new American branch. Some went to Europe, others sent communications. Some were high officers in the Freemasonic fraternity, and others were leaders in various metaphysical and scientific work based upon the Rosicrucian principles.

“Among those who went to Europe was Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, the President of the New York Institute for Psychological Research, and former editor of several scientific and metaphysical magazines. He was duly examined and tested for his seven years of preparation, and sent from Paris to a city in the south of France where the ancient seat of Rosicrucian Councils had been maintained for several centuries. Here in a special conclave of Supreme Masters, Hierophants, and Councilors of the Order for France and other countries, he was selected and elected to be the American Legate, and the proper instructions were given him to proceed to America and announce the new birth of the Order, just as it had been announced in Cassel, Germany, in 1610.”

