

Kennedy, Krista, George Lamoine, and Cécile Révauger. “Chambers, Ephraim (1683-1740).” *Le Monde Maçonique des Lumières (Europe, Amériques et Colonies.)* Vol. I. Eds. Charles Porset and Cécile Révauger. Trans. Michelle Bailat-Jones. Paris : Honore Champion, 2013. 728-730. Print.

**Chambers, Ephraim, (1683-1740).** – Encyclopedist. Born c.1680 in Kendall, Westmorland; deceased at Canonbury House, Islington (London suburb) on 15 May 1740. From a farming family; he attended Heversham Grammar School. Apprenticed to a variety of trades in London, then from 1714-1721 was apprenticed to John Senex\*, a globe and mapmaker (*Gentleman’s Magazine*, No. 76, Sept. 1785). According to *Universal Magazine* (1785), “a business which is connected with Literature and especially with Astronomy and Geography.” Senex was one of the best cartographers and globemakers in England; after 1700 he was established at The Globe, in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street. According to several documents, Chambers would have been apprenticed in 1713, which would have been quite uncommon as he was 33 years old... and even more so because Senex was his exact contemporary. According to the *D.N.B.* Chambers was interested in preparing a work that would surpass the only existing encyclopedia at the time, the *Lexicon Technicum* by John Harris, published in 1704, which did not cover all subjects. Chambers then left Senex and rented an apartment at Gray’s Inn, and he lived there until his health brought him eventually to Canonbury House, Islington. He became a writer, a contributor and editor for various magazines, and a French-to-English translator. His first work was an English edition of Sébastien Le Clerc’s *Traité d’Architecture* [...] (Paris: P. Giffart, 1714, 2 vols. in-folio), entitled *A Treatise of Architecture* [...] and published in 1723. On 17 January 1726 he paid for the printing of a subscription offer for an encyclopedia project, “*Proposals for printing by subscription, Cyclopaedia: or, an universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, In two Volumes.*” That same year, he translated the work of the Jesuit Father Jean de Breuil (1602-70) *La perspective pratique, nécessaire à tous peintres, graveurs, sculpteurs et architectes, [...] et autres se servant du dessin* (published in 1642-49) under the English title *The Practice of Perspective* [...] This work is considered one of the most influential in its field from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1727, he published the English version of Herman Boerhaave, entitled *A new Method of Chemistry* [...] ; 1728 was the year of the *Cyclopædia*. It was dedicated to the King on 15 October 1727 and cost 4 guineas, a considerable amount which was beyond the means of the average reader. Given the significance of the work, the *Cyclopaedia* was an undertaking that brought together several shareholding booksellers. It was an immediate success, and the publishers granted Chambers the significant sum of £500 for the first edition (Kafker, 1981). On 6 December 1729, Chambers was elected Fellow of the prestigious Royal Society, a society whose goal was scientific enlightenment. From 1730 to 1736, he was the editor of and contributor to the *Literary Magazine*. In 1734, he published a short brochure entitled, *Considerations Preparatory to a Second Edition, Submitted to the Publick*. In 1737, the owners of the *Cyclopædia* looked to publish a newly revised volume followed by the remaining work in annual volumes. But a bill was passed in the House of Commons that would require publishers to print additions or corrections of a published work separately. The bill was rejected by the House of Lords. In 1738, a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Cyclopædia* appeared, a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition was printed in Dublin in 1739 or 1740, the *Additions* to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition appeared posthumously in 1741 and the revised, corrected and improved editions appeared to varying successes in 1741 and 1743(5<sup>th</sup>), 1750 (6<sup>th</sup>), 1751-1752 (7<sup>th</sup>). Chambers traveled to France, both to Paris and to the south, hoping to find rest from his unremitting and exhausting project. He wrote an account of his French travels but the manuscript has since been lost. In April 1787, *Gentleman’s Magazine* published his letters to a woman named Mrs. Chambers, who was most likely his sister-in-law (pg. 314-317, 381-382). He returned to London, ill, and was cared for by his main shareholder, the bookseller Thomas Longman. In 1742, the English edition of *Histoire et Mémoires de l’Académie royale des Sciences de Paris* was published, translated and abridged by J. Marty and E. Chambers (London: John & Paul Knapton). The *Cyclopædia* was translated into French by the Parisian bookseller Le Breton and his associates, a group that obtained the royal rights for 20 years for the publication of *Un Dictionnaire universel des arts et des sciences*, translated by E. Chambers. The Abbot Gua de Malves, member of the Academy of Sciences, was the editor and he recruited Diderot and d’Alembert. However, the abbot handed over the project to them a year later.

There remains a doubt as to whether Chambers was a member of the Freemasons, as this affiliation is not mentioned anywhere in the DNB (2004). It is important to be cautious with following lodge archives. In fact, there is mention of a “Brother Chambers, honorable Lodge Master of Richmond” who contributed to charity funds on 21 April 1730: “Account of charity received. Br. Chambers master of Richmond Lodge” with the note, “for himself only,” which means he made a donation for

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“himself” or perhaps for the members of his own lodge only, of 10 shillings and 6 pence (W.J. Songhurst, *Quatuor Coronatorum Antigraphia*, 1913, X, 122). The Richmond Lodge was the one created in 1728 and which took the name “Richmond” in 1734 (Lane, 1895, “Richmond Lodge”). Clarke also notes that “the Brother Chambers was one of three brothers named by the Grand Lodge in 1736 to obtain the freedom of a brother in debtor's prison” (Clarke, 1967, 114). The dates coincide—however, without a first name it is difficult to establish whether this was actually the author of the *Cyclopædia*.

The most likely indication that Chambers was a Freemason is the fact that John Senex was the publisher of the first edition of Anderson’s *Constitutions*. Fourteen percent of the approximately 380 subscribers of the first edition of the *Cyclopædia* can be found on the Grand Lodge registers of the time period. Senex was the 2nd Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of London, becoming 1<sup>st</sup> Grand Master in 1728, and was received as a member of the Royal Society in the same year as Chambers. Similar to other known individuals of the same time period, links between members of learned societies and Freemasons are manifest and suggest obvious connections.

Bibliography. Ephraim Chambers, *A Treatise of Architecture with Remarks and Observations. Necessary for Young People, who wou’d apply themselves to that Noble Art.* (London 1723); Ephraim Chambers, *The Practice of Perspective, or, an easy method of representing natural objects according to the rules of art [...], The whole illustrated with 150 copper-plates (written in French by a Jesuit of Paris)* London: Thomas & John Bowles, 1726, in-fol.; E. Chambers, translator of H. Boerhaave, *A New Method of Chemistry, including the theory and practice of the art [...], translated by P. Shaw & E. Chambers with additional notes.* London: J. Osborne & Thomas Longman, in-4°, 1727; Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences containing the definitions of the terms and counts of things signify’d thereby [...]*, London: John & James Knapton & alii; 1728; Ephraim Chambers, *The Literary Magazine [...]* by a Society of Gentlemen (London 1735-37) ; Ephraim Chambers, *Universal Magazine* n° 76, September 1785; John Lane, *Masonic Records*, 1717-1886, London, 1886, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1895; W.J. Songhurst, *Quatuor Coronatorum Antigraphia*, Masonic Reprints of the *Quatuor Coronati Lodge*, No. 2076, London, W. J. Barrett, 1913, vol. X, 122; J.R. Clarke, “The Royal Society and early Grand Lodge Freemasonry”, *AQC*, 1967, vol. 80, p.110-119; Franck Kafker, *Notable encyclopedias of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Nine Predecessors of the Encyclopédie*, Oxford, 1981; Francis Lespinasse, revised by Michael Harris. CHAMBERS, EPHRAIM (1680?-1740), *ENCYCLOPAEDIST*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), O.U.P., 2004; The facsimile of the frontispiece of the first edition of the *Cyclopædia* can be found at: [she-philosopher.com/gallery/gallery\\_cat01.html](http://she-philosopher.com/gallery/gallery_cat01.html)

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