



# THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY



**In Memory of Manly Palmer  
Hall: March 18, 1901 –**

# August 29, 1990

The founder of the Philosophical Research Society (PRS), Manly P. Hall, died thirty years ago today, August 29, 1990. Born in Canada in 1901, Mr. Hall arrived in Los Angeles in the fall of 1919. Like many eighteen-year-olds, he must have felt a bit lost. Manly knew no father, and his mother had been living in Santa Monica. He was raised by his maternal grandmother and spent his youth traveling with her as she moved frequently. When she died in New York while Manly was working as a clerk on Wall Street, he was forced to come to a Southern California that was burgeoning with newcomers and new ideas. Little did he know just how much he would contribute to the latter, though he would have called them esoteric—old ideas that never lost their relevance, only their visibility. Los Angeles was the place where Manly Hall would make the invisible visible once again.

What an amazing time it was in Los Angeles and the world. People living in the 1920s were only a few years past the First World War and from their own influenza pandemic. World War I was responsible for the deaths of twenty-million people; the 1918 H1N1 virus killed fifty million people. White supremacy spit forth its venom due in part to D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which prompted a rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, and by the mid-1920s, the KKK boasted a membership of millions. Women were granted the right to vote, while serving alcohol was prohibited through the Volstead Act, which produced an unprecedented wave of crime and the birth of the mafia. The world and the nation were churning.

Los Angeles in the 1920s saw the birth of the film industry, and Mr. Hall befriended many of those stars through the years including Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Burl Ives, and others (not to mention starring in his own film, *When Were You Born*). The city itself doubled in size in the decade that Mr. Hall began lecturing, writing, and traveling. Along with Hollywood's booming industry, there was oil and oil money in Southern California. Some of that money may have supported Mr. Hall in the founding of PRS, including his travels and publications, through the munificence of Carolyn Lloyd and her

daughter Alma Estelle. More important, perhaps, was the fact that Southern California was emerging as a new Eden “west of the west.” Crass boosterism, the folklore of climatology, and creative mythology caused a great migration to the area for those looking for new beginnings, healing, and wealth. Carey McWilliams, the venerable historian of Southern California, argues that once these migrants arrived in a region that promised renewed health but had no medical infrastructure, they began seeking alternative methods of well-being. Put another way, Los Angeles was, for a number of reasons, becoming a city of seekers. Hall himself, in a 1932 lecture titled “The Horoscope of Los Angeles,” proclaimed, “Los Angeles is the greenhouse of America. It is a place of experimentation in which we are combining facts and producing new species. . . . It is primarily fitted to be the greatest cultural center of the world. A city that is sacred in being a nucleus where the finer principles of life can come into expression.”

It was into this rich and evocative environment that a young Manly Palmer Hall introduced “The Big Book,” *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, published in 1928 when he was only twenty-seven. It was never meant to be an easy book, as the full title expresses: “An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy.” It is not even easy to hold in one’s hands—large, heavy, and laden with wisdom. It is unquestionably a foundational and perennial text, a wellspring of esoteric knowledge wedded to insights for living. Mr. Hall’s work is an encyclopedic reference for those who seek the kind of wisdom that is not usually found in the standard venues, such as university curricula and mainstream publishing. Mr. Hall himself was not a holy man; rather, he was a man who began his life in difficult and unconventional circumstances and found a way to meaning through “the secret teachings of all ages.” That he found his way is remarkable; that he was then able to share his journey and wisdom with others is a great gift to the world, one that we need now more than ever.

The Big Book is still Mr. Hall’s best-selling work, and, thirty years after his death, the Society is alive and well. Mr. Hall’s vision, mission, and values remain unchanged since its founding eighty-six years ago. Now we call our mission “practical and profound wisdom for the 21st century” because life is simple, but living it is difficult, and we need all the help we can get. The Society

also needs all the help it can get since, like most non-profits, we depend largely on donations to exist. In the coming months, I hope to have some exciting news about new editions of existing works and even some new, previously unpublished works of Mr. Hall. Today, however, thirty years after his death, we reflect on the life and work of a person who began his life on the margins of society without the comforts of family, as most of us know it and who, through study, dedication, and diligence, made himself a singular figure in the search for meaning, as well as one of history's great Angelenos. Rest in peace, power, and love, Mr. Hall. You will not be forgotten and will always be revered.

Greg Salyer, Ph.D.

President/CEO

The Philosophical Research Society [prs.org](http://prs.org)

Support PRS at [prs.org/support](http://prs.org/support)

[Top Image: Manly Palmer Hall at the Ennis House in Los Feliz, where he lived for a time.]





---

*Copyright © 2020 Philosophical Research Society, All rights reserved.*

You are receiving this email because you have expressed interest in being notified about upcoming events and other opportunities at the Philosophical Research Society.

**Our mailing address is:**

Philosophical Research Society  
3910 Los Feliz Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90027

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.

---