



MAX HEINDEL
A Biography

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MAX HEINDEL
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Introduction

Max Heindel, founder of the Rosicrucian Fellowship, was born on July 23rd, 1865, near Copenhagen, into the von Grasshof family, who were connected to the German court in Bismarck's lifetime. His father, François-Louis von Grasshof, emigrated to Denmark when he was young. There he married Anna Withen, a young Danish noblewoman. Together they had 3 children: two sons and a daughter. The eldest was Carl-Louis von Grasshof, who later went by the name of Max Heindel.

At the age of eight, Max Heindel fell and seriously injured his left leg while striding over a stream, which left him bedridden for 16 months. The surgeons had removed many bone fragments from the wound and had had to insert several draining tubes in order to drain off the pus that was constantly forming. For ten years, Max Heindel had to walk with a special shoe until his leg was strong enough to manage without. But one of the wounds wouldn't heal and a fresh bandage had to be applied day and night. It is only about 30 years later, after six months of vegetarian diet, that the wound healed up completely.

When he was sixteen, Max Heindel left for England, as he somehow felt suffocated by his life at home. He started working in the Glasgow shipyards to become an engineer. Later, he settled in Liverpool, where he became the chief engineer

of one of Cunard Line's large ships.

In 1885, he married Catherine Luetjens Dorothy Wallace, with whom he had three girls and a boy. But marital life becoming a source of distress and sorrow for them both, they eventually divorced. Max Heindel then left for the United States where he hoped to start a new life.

From 1896 to 1902, Max Heindel lived in New York, where he worked as a consulting engineer. This period was full of hardships, marked by daily deprivation and hunger. The marriage he had contracted at that time, and which had given him another two girls and a boy, ended in 1905 with the death of his wife.

Raised as a Lutheran, Max Heindel later joined a Quaker Church. In 1903, he was to be found in Los Angeles, where he studied metaphysics and joined the Theosophical Society, of which he would be vice president between 1904 and 1905. There he met Augusta Foss, who introduced him to astrology and who would later on, in 1909, become his wife and main associate.

At that time, an intense desire was growing in him to discover the cause and the remedy for all moral and physical sufferings of humanity. Much to his delight, he found that astrology could be the key to the inner nature of man.

In 1905, Heindel suffered a severe heart attack caused by

deprivation and overwork (he worked and studied from 16 to 18 hours a day) and his illness would make him more and more aware of the necessity for humans to understand the causes of their sufferings. He started a conference tour on Christian mysticism and astrology which brought him to Seattle, Washington. He had kept in touch with Alma von Brandis, a friend of his who had been trying to persuade him to go to Germany and meet Rudolph Steiner. It is only in 1907, after meeting her in Dallas, that Heindel finally got convinced to take the journey. Alma even offered to pay for his trip.

It is the preface to the second edition of his book “Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception” that holds the most detailed information about Heindel’s stay there:

“From the beginning of November 1907 to the end of March 1908, the writer devoted his time to reviewing the teachings of Dr. Steiner, who was absent from Berlin for almost all that time. In the last of about six personal interviews with Dr. Steiner, the writer mentioned that he had started writing a book along occult lines; a sort of compendium of the teachings from East and West.

« Dr. Steiner then urged that if any of the teachings promulgated by him were used, he ought to be mentioned as authority and source of information. As a consequence, the author agreed to dedicate his work to Dr. Steiner. »

During January, February and March 1908, the Elder Brother, whom the writer now knows and reveres as Teacher, came several times, clothed in his vital body, and enlightened him on various points. In April and May, after unwittingly passing a test, the writer was invited to a journey to the estate on which stands the Temple of the Rosy Cross.

There he met the Elder Brother in his dense body; and there he was given the far-reaching, synthetic philosophy held in the present work—which in the opinion of many former occult students in England, on the European Continent, and in America, embodies everything that has been taught publicly or esoterically in the past, and besides contains much more information that has never been published before.

This is the reason why the unfinished manuscript mentioned to Dr. Steiner was destroyed; however, as the later and more complete teaching given by the Elder Brother corroborated the teachings of Dr. Steiner along the main lines, it was thought better to dedicate the book to him than to seem a plagiarist. Of that there would have been no real danger, for the plagiarist invariably gives less than the author from whom he steals, and it will be found that in any case where previous works are compared with the present, this book will always give more information.

The dedication therefore was a mistake (it read: Dedicated to my esteemed friend Dr. Rudolf Steiner, in grateful recognition of his precious teachings; and to my friend Dr. Alma Von Brandis, for the inestimable influence she has exercised on my life and my spiritual development"). It has led many people who merely glanced at the book to infer that it embraces the teachings of Dr. Steiner, and a careful perusal of pages 8 and 9 (from bottom of page 13 to top of page 15 in the new purple cosmogony) will show that this dedication was never intended to convey such an idea. The writer does not know how to express the true idea in a dedicatory sentence, hence has he decided to withdraw it, with an apology to Dr. Steiner for any trouble that may be caused by the hasty conclusions concerning his responsibility in the Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception."

As Heindel revealed, the test mentioned above consisted in his future Instructor's affirming twice, with a month's interval, that the Rosicrucian Order held solutions for the Mysteries of the Universe that were much more extensive than all the teachings published thus far; and that he would share everything with Heindel, provided he kept it a secret.

Max Heindel refused outright and repeatedly said: "If what you possess is that good, it has to be told to the world". But when he refused a second time, the Instructor congratulated him on passing the test and revealed that he

had been under observation for several years as a potential candidate for the publication of the teachings, which was to take place in late December 1909. He was invited to the Rosicrucian Temple close to the Bohemian border. He stayed there for more than a month, in direct contact with the Rosicrucian Brothers, who shared with him the teachings that are today found in the book entitled “The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception”.

When he started writing the book it was only a draft, according to his Instructor, who assured him that once he had returned to the United States, he would like to revise the text. Max Heindel didn't believe it, but the prediction came true: he started to rewrite this monumental work in New York, and when the weather became unbearably hot, he continued further up north, in Buffalo, where he finished the manuscript in September 1908.

The problem now was to publish the book and raise the funds for it. Due to the summer heat, Max Heindel's classes and lectures were not as successful as expected. But moving more to the South-East, in Columbus, Ohio, he found a better place to carry out his activity, as well as assistance from Ms. Rath-Merril and her daughter, who helped him draw the diagrams for his book.

He spent several months in this city, where his lectures and classes were well received and he thus founded the first Rosicrucian center in November 1908. After each lecture,

he would make photocopies of the text and distribute them for free. Every day he travelled miles to display maps where passers-by could see them, and he also wrote articles for magazines, and submitted them to their editors. Some of the latter were strongly against these new teachings, but Heindel, approaching them in his friendly way, was generally able to win them over, sometimes getting a whole column which attracted many readers.

After giving twenty lectures in Columbus he went to Seattle, where he had made many friends back in 1906. One of his friends, William M. Patterson, who was a publisher and editor himself, not only could help him to get his book to an editor in Chicago, but also gave him the most precious advice on his publication. In Seattle, Ms. Jessie Brewster and Kingsmill Commander were of great help to him too, by revising his manuscript; and on August 10th, 1909, on the suggestion of a group of his students, the organization called “The Rosicrucian Fellowship” was founded.

Together with Mr. Patterson, Max Heindel took his manuscript of the “Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception” as well as the texts from his twenty lectures to Chicago, where everything was printed later on (his lectures in booklet form to be distributed, as the volume containing them was not published until after his death). He described his activity in Chicago as such: “The “Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception” was published in November 1909. Friends of mine had

revised the manuscript and done a tremendous job, but of course, I had to read it again myself before handing it to the publisher. I reread and proofread it once and then again with all the corrections made. I then read it all over again after the page breaks had been inserted, giving instructions to the image designers for the drawings, then to the printer on how they were to be positioned in the book, etc. I would get up at 6 am and work until late at night during all those weeks, stuck in the middle of an endless confusion, with the other people working and the deafening noises of Chicago, and I often felt at the limit of what my nerves could take. But still, I was able to keep my balance and to add several new points to the “Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception”. If I hadn’t had the Elder Brothers’ support, I would have given up; but it was their work, and they supported me until the end.”

While Max Heindel was in Chicago, all copies of the first edition, except for a couple of hundreds that were being stocked in Seattle, had been stored by a manager of a publishing house. The latter was a woman deeply in debt and she handed the copies in her possession out to other editors who were also her creditors. When a new stock of books had to be delivered from Seattle, they discovered that the first edition was exhausted, and thus a new one needed to be ordered, to which a 60-page index was added.

One might think that the loss of two thirds of the “Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception” copies would be a di-

saster for a promoter of little means, but that was not the case. In fact, circumstances turned out to be fortuitous, since the publishing house's manager had been closely involved in *avant-garde* movements such as New Thought, Theosophy, etc., and had been providing them with books from major publishing houses for years. She therefore had suggested to pay off her debts with copies of the "Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception", the work not being well-known at that point. This way, she had created a demand for the book which helped to spread the Rosicrucian teachings throughout the world. All in all, the incident had been a real blessing.

After creating Rosicrucian Fellowship centers in Columbus, Seattle, Yakima, Washington and Portland, Oregon, Max Heindel went back to Los Angeles in November 1909, willing to spread his message further. From late November 1909 to mid-March 1910, assisted by Augusta Foss, he gave classes and three weekly lectures, that were each time crowded with more than a thousand auditors. In March, his poor health condition keeping him from going on with his lectures, he had to be hospitalized again for heart problems. Meanwhile, Augusta Foss replaced him in his classes and often had about 120 students in astrology.

Once he had recovered, Max Heindel moved to Bunker Hill, a neighborhood close to downtown Los Angeles, where he wrote a compilation to answer his auditors'

questions, publishing it under the title “Questions and Answers” (it was the first issue).

Max Heindel and Augusta Foss got married on August 10th, 1910 in Santa Ana (between Los Angeles and Oceanside). The following day, he already left north for a conference tour in Oregon and Washington, but his heart problems would soon stop him anew. He returned to Los Angeles, or more precisely to its surroundings, Ocean Park, on the Pacific coast, where Ms. Heindel had acquired a cottage to receive him. In November, they bought a small printing press and continued the work they had started in Seattle in 1909, by sending out lessons to their members. At the same time, Max Heindel was working on the manuscript of yet another book called “The Rosicrucian Mysteries”, dictating his text to a stenographer while pacing up and down the room, as Ms. Heindel later recalled.

In addition, Max Heindel was planning on building a healing center, as his Instructor had recommended, but to do so, it became necessary to establish permanent headquarters. In the meantime, William Patterson, Heindel’s friend who had helped him publish the “Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception” and the twenty lectures, paid a visit together with his wife and offered Heindel to help find a site and to advance the required money. They began searching for a suitable place and came across a site of about fifteen hectares in Westwood (west of Hollywood, close to where the University of Los Angeles is now located).

A down payment was made but as certain members refused to sign the relevant paperwork, the purchase was not concluded.

Nevertheless, Mr. and Ms. Heindel went on looking for other sites, and on a Sunday morning, they bought tickets for the train to San Diego, asking to make stops in San Juan Capistrano and Oceanside, but were only allowed one stop in Oceanside.

This is what Ms. Heindel said about their arrival: “No one was in sight, except for a freckle-faced, about ten-year-old little boy who welcomed us with a large smile, saying: “Hello! What are you looking for?” My husband, who was very fond of children, simply said: “We would like to buy land, can you sell us some?” To our surprise, the boy answered: “No, I can’t, but look, there is the man who can”, and pointed at a silver-haired man who was coming towards them through a vacant lot.

“We then learnt from Mr. Chauncey Hayes that he was the only real estate agent in that small village and how lucky we had been to meet him, as he was just about to leave for a couple of weeks. When he heard what we were looking for, he called to a man who was standing at the door of a livery stable and asked him to drive us to the “reservoir site”. The man soon returned with a buggy drawn by two dashing horses. About twenty minutes later, we were on the top of a hill.

“The view upon the San Luis Rey valley was magnificent. We were on a plateau of about fifteen hectares with desert plants like wormwood and sagebrush and no greenery at all. To the north, we could spot the top of two rather ugly reservoirs that supplied Oceanside with water. Despite the state of the land itself, the view from afar, that is, over the mountains to the northeast and the ocean to the southwest, was really breath-taking.

Max Heindel, who had had a vision of our future headquarters, immediately exclaimed “Oh! This is it, this is the place!”

This is how the worldwide headquarters of the Rosicrucian Fellowship was purchased. The first payment of one thousand dollars was made by William Patterson, while the remaining 4,000 dollars were to be paid in annual installments.

The ceremony launching the construction works took place on October 28th. Readers can find the details in the volume “Letters to Students”, Letter No. 12.

After they had established the new headquarters, Mr. and Ms. Heindel and other devoted helpers undertook the task of transforming this barren landscape into a beautiful green parkland, as well as spreading the teachings of Western Wisdom through monthly letters and lessons, books, a newspaper and pamphlets.

A pioneer's work is never easy, and the task undertaken by Heindel was no exception. But thanks to his superhuman efforts, to the help of his faithful wife and of devoted associates, this man managed to create, within a couple of years, a spiritual center from where the teachings of the New Age of Aquarius would radiate for centuries.

According to the early issues of "Echoes from Mount Ecclesia" (later called the "Rays from the Rose Cross Magazine") and those who had the privilege to know him, Max Heindel did his utmost to reach the goals he had set for himself. He worked tirelessly on the construction of new buildings, installed electricity provided by a generator that he had acquired and dug a well to find water at the bottom of the grounds and to transport it to a reservoir by using a motor pump, for the town's water had run dry up at that height. In late 1918, there was, besides the two original buildings, a chapel where a brief mass was held daily, a cafeteria for staff and visitors, an administrative building with a printing press, a bookbinding workshop and offices as well as cottages to house coworkers, all thanks to his efforts. A long and winding palm-fringed driveway had been built, the palm trees still being splendid today, as well as the rest of the estate, with its eucalyptuses, its Peruvian pepper plants, its shrubs and flowers.

For all these years, Max Heindel was also very busy producing monthly letters and lessons for his students, writing articles for the "Magazine" and teaching philosophy

and astrology classes. In November 1918, shortly before his death, he addressed a letter to his students, in which he disclosed the publication of 60 astrological almanacs starting from 1860 onwards, their calculations having taken a year of intensive work; of a Table of Houses and of the volume “The Message of the Stars”, a teamwork with his wife, that supplemented the “Scientific Astrology Simplified”, a book written in 1909 and later completed by “Philosophy and Astrology Encyclopedia”.

The books that were not mentioned in this biography were published after his death, and contain to a large extent his monthly lessons to students and other writings published in “Rays”, etc.

In the eight years following the establishing of the Mount Ecclesia Headquarters in 1911, Max Heindel continued overworking, what eventually wore his earthly body out. Having suffered from cardiovascular problems for years, he certainly knew that the end was near, and that the time would come soon when he would have to carry on with his work on the other side.

On January 6th, 1919 at 8:25 pm, the Rosicrucian Elder Brothers’ faithful messenger awakened to Eternal Life. In the morning of that same day, he had seemed even happier than usual but in the evening, while he was speaking to Ms. Heindel about a letter he had written, he had slowly slumped down on the floor, telling her again “All is well, dear”.

It is only appropriate to conclude these last lines by quoting Ms. Corinne Heline's testimony, who has had the privilege of working with him for five years: "I think that Max Heindel is the most perfect example I know of a balance between the mystical and practical sides of life. He was unpretentious and humble, with the gift for accomplishing the most common job with grace and joy. If needed, he would go to the stable and milk the cow, or gather a swarm of bees. He would climb up a lamppost to repair the electrical cable, plant trees, weed the kitchen garden, pick up vegetables. He did all of that with the same seriousness and enthusiasm as when he went to the office, to the classroom or to the auditorium to share his wisdom and knowledge."



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MAX HEINDEL

A Biography

Max Heindel, an astrologer, an occultist and a Christian mystic, was a leading pioneer of what is today known as the Rosicrucian Fellowship. Among Max Heindel's most notable writings is *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, a comprehensive guide to the causes and solutions for the sufferings of mankind, as well as a detailed study of the universe and of human evolution.

Those who had the privilege of knowing Max Heindel personally describe a man of great humility, endowed with considerable knowledge and profound wisdom, someone who was always ready to help his fellow beings in their quest for spirituality.

Max Heindel, a Biography is an account of Max Heindel's life and work, based on the talks by Corinne Heline at Mount Ecclesia between 1963 and 1965.



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