

**GIOVANNI GIACOMO CASANOVA, LIBERTINE, GAMBLER, SPY, STATESMAN, FREEMASON  
BY  
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Mention the name Casanova, and the first image that comes to mind is that of the epitome of the womanizer, a lifetime gambler, and one who you would not wish to emulate. The name Casanova might be said to be synonymous with libertine. This could not be further from the truth. Let us look at the life of Giovanni Casanova and investigate what his lifetime was really like, and his views on Freemasonry.

Giovanni Casanova entered his life on April 2, 1725 at Venice, Republic of Venice. His parents were Gaetano Giuseppe Casanova and Zanetta Farussi. Giovcvanni's father was an actor and dancer, his mother was an actress. . He went to meet the Supreme Architect of the Universe on June 4, 1798 at Duchiov, Kingdom of Bohemia, a part of the Holy Roman Empire. He was age 75 at his death. .

Much occurred between these two dates. The life of Giovanni Casanova embraced a myriad of experiences, both positive and negative. During his lifetime, Giovanni Casanova associated with the royal heads of Europe, leaders of the Catholic hierarchy such as cardinals and popes, and people of renown in the arts and sciences, such as Goethe, Voltaire, and Mozart.

Casanova's father died when Casanova was eight years old. His mother, during his early years, was off touring as an actress. The young Giovanni was placed in the care of his grandmother, Maria Baldassera. As a youth, Giovanni suffered numerous nosebleeds. In order to effect a cure for this ailment, Casanova's grandmother sought treatment from a woman who proclaimed herself to be a witch. Casanova would be taken to her hovel where an old woman, surrounded by several other people, applied an unguent to his nose. This unguent was without effect, however, Casanova appeared to be enthralled by the incantations utilized by the occult practitioner.

In order to find a cure that worked, Casanova was sent to Padua to get him away from the atmosphere surrounding Venice. Casanova was strongly affected by the neglect of his parents, as shown by the death of his father when Casanova was a youth, and the abandonment of his mother as she was travelling in pursuit of her actress career.

Giovanni Casanova was extremely intelligent and had a quick wit. He matriculated at the University of Padua at age 12 and was graduated at age 17. He then attained a degree in law. At the University Casanova studied moral philosophy, chemistry, and mathematics.

The commencement of Casanova's destructive behavior was while he was at the university. It was there that he began his career in gambling. Casanova became heavily in debt and his grandmother recalled him back to Venice. This was to become a serious problem later in life, on the one hand, but led to an important plus in his later life.

Casanova achieved a degree in clerical law and received minor order and was admitted as an abbe.' Casanova shuttled back and forth between his university in Padua and Venice. During this period of time Casanova became somewhat of a ner do well and a dandy.

Throughout his life, Casanova made it a habit to connect with others who could teach him the good things of life, such as the best of food, wine, and how to behave in polite society. It was through these connections that the young Giovanni Casanova had his first long-term liaisons with the female gender. This liaison was with two sisters, ages fourteen and sixteen. These two sisters taught Casanova the wonders of a sexual relationship.

Casanova then sought a career in the Catholic Church. He allied himself with Cardinal Acquaviva. This led to a meeting with the Pope. Casanova asked the Pope if he could get access to the “forbidden books”. A scandal, which seemed to be the story of Casanova’s life, angered the Cardinal, and ended Giovanni’s vocation with the Church.

Casanova then looked to the military for his next calling. He found the military to be not to his liking and boring. He was said to have lost most of his military pay to gambling. He then became a professional gambler. This also resulted in financial losses. Casanova then became a professional musician, playing the violin.

Casanova’s life plan is best stated in his Memoirs. “I took the most creditable, the noblest, and the only natural course. I decided to put myself in a position where I need no longer go without the necessities of life, and what these necessities were for me, no one could judge better than me”.

Casanova went through life looking for associations that would enhance his position in society. He went to work as an assistant to a senator. Giovanni assumed the role of a nobleman, emulating one in dress and station. During this time he continued in his gambling and amorous pursuits.

Casanova became interested in cabalism and secret societies. He had achieved some success in his gambling ventured and undertook to travel his known world. While on these travels, Casanova spent his time gambling and womanizing.

It was during these travels that he found himself in the City of Lyon, France. It was here, that Casanova became initiated into Freemasonry. He also became involved in Rosicrucianism. Casanova used his contacts in these organizations to further his acquisition of important contacts.

Casanova escaped from prison and went to France. He, again, made use of his ability to make influential acquaintances. One of these induced Casanova to become involved with fundraising for the government. Using his gambling knowledge, Casanova founded a state lottery for the French government. This was extremely successful and resurrected Casanova to prominence.

Casanova claimed to be a Rosicrucian and alchemist. This made him accepted into important society where he met and started a liaison with Madam De Pompadour, and a friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Once again, Casanova used his ability to make important liaisons to further his position in society.

It was at this time that Casanova became a spy for the French government. He was successful at this endeavor and the French government, again, asked him to use the state lottery to increase the government financial coffers. The government even offered him French citizenship, along with a title and a pension if he would work for the Finance Ministry.

Casanova went to England, where he attempted to interest the British government in his ideas for a state lottery. He also traveled to the capitals of Europe in his attempts to start a state lottery in other nations.

It was during this time in his life that Casanova took upon himself the nom de plume of Chevalier de Seingalt, a name he continued to use from time to time.

When one of his patrons died, Casanova became librarian to Count Joseph Karl Von Waldstein of, what is now the Czech Republic. Count Waldstein was also a cabalist and Freemason. Casanova found this relationship boring and not to his liking.

Casanova died on June 4, 1798 at age 73. His last words were said to have been, “I have lived as a philosopher, and I die as a Christian”. Casanova’s burial place remains a mystery to this day.

Casanova was reported to have received his first degree in Freemasonry while in Lyon, France. He was also reported to have become a Master Mason in Paris. His initiation and raising were said to have been in the year 1750. These facts were reported by the renowned Masonic historian, Albert Gallatin Mackey.

There were many references to Freemasonry in Casanova's memoirs. Some of these references follow.

A relationship to Masonic education may be found in the quotation, "No one in this world can obtain a knowledge of everything, but every man who feels himself endowed with faculties, and can realize the extent of his moral strength, should endeavor to obtain the greatest amount of knowledge."

Another of Casanova's quotations talks about topics that continue in Freemasonry today. "...those whose social existence is marked by intelligence and merit, by learning or by wealth, can be (and many of them are) Freemasons but it is possible to suppose that such meetings in which the initiated, making it a law never to speak, "intra muros" either of politics, or of religions, or of governments, converse only concerning emblems which are either moral or trifling".

Speaking of the relationship between Christianity and Freemasonry, Casanova remarked, ". . . the Pope, in spite of his infallibility, will not prevent his persecutions from giving Freemasonry an importance which it perhaps would have never obtained if it would have been left alone." He went on further to state, "Mystery is the essence of man's nature, and whatever presents itself or mankind under a mysterious appearance will always excite curiosity and be sought, even when men are satisfied that the veil covers nothing but a cypher". This thought presages the reason that Casanova found Freemasonry so enticing, and, perhaps, one of the reasons that those who petition our fraternity today, find the entry into our degrees vital.

One of Casanova's most important quotes in his Memoirs is, "Upon the whole, I would advise well-born young men, who intend to travel, to become Freemasons; but I would advise them to be careful in selecting a lodge, because, although bad company cannot have any influence while inside of the lodge, the candidate must guard against bad influences." This truism holds today, just as it did in the middle 1700's.

A telling passage indicates Casanova's feeling of Freemasonry. "Those who become Freemasons for the sake of finding out the secret of the order, run a very great risk of growing old under the trowel without ever realizing their purpose. Yet there is a secret, but it is so inviolable that it has never been confided or whispered to anyone. Those who stop at the outward crust of things imagine that the secret consists in words, in signs, or that the main point of it is to be found only in reaching the highest degree. This is a mistaken view: the man who guesses the secret of Freemasonry, and to know it you must guess it, reaches that point only through long attendance in the lodges through deep thinking, comparison, and deduction. He would not trust that secret to his best friend in Freemasonry, because he is aware that if his friend has not found it out, he could not make any use of it after it has been whispered into his ear. No, he keeps his peace, and the secret remains a secret". Is this not, the lesson of the Master Mason degree. It also is the lesson to be learned regarding Masonic education.

"Everything done in a lodge must be secret; but those who have unscrupulously revealed what is done in lodge, have been unable to reveal that which is essential; they had not knowledge of it, and, had they known it, they certainly would not have unveiled the mystery of the ceremonies".

Casanova spoke regarding his Masonic membership, "The greatest wonder of all, however, was nothing else that a Freemason's apron. Which, as the curator very sagely declared, proves the existence of such an order, whatever some might say".

In talking about one of his important acquaintances, Casanova remarked, "I embraced him affectionately, and in our greeting I discovered that he was a brother Mason".

Finally, in his Memoirs, Casanova wrote about his relationship with the Cardinal Braneaforte, the Papal legate. Casanova stated that, "We met at the Lodge of Freemasons, for the members of the Sacred College were by no means afraid of their own anathemas". Casanova would not trust that secret to his best friend in Freemasonry because if the secret were found out it could not be used once it had been whispered in his ear. This, again, indicates the lesson of the Third Degree.

As stated above, Casanova died on June 4, 1798. There appears to be no doubt that he was, indeed, a Freemason. However, with his lifetime of womanizing and gambling, can we really state that there died a just and upright Mason? His Memoirs appear to indicate that Casanova wished to live as such a just and upright Mason. But was this the case. We each have to make our own decision as to this appellation.