

A Masonic Minute

The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario To serve the Brethren and protect the Constitution

While Freemasonry has existed '*from time immemorial*' the first Grand Lodge came into existence when four old lodges met in London, England on St. John's Day, 24th June 1717. That historic meeting, from which we date Freemasonry in its modern form, took place in a convivial atmosphere at the Goose and Gridiron Ale House, under the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Freemasonry officially came to what is now Canada in 1733 when the Grand Master of England appointed Major Henry Price (1697-1780) as 'Provincial Grand Master of New England and the Dominions and Territories thereunto belonging', and in the following year named him Provincial Grand Master of North America.¹ Historically, The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts ranks as the senior jurisdiction in the New World, although Pennsylvania can document lodges meeting there at an earlier date. Many early lodges trace their origins to the travelling warrants held by military regiments in the garrisons of the British colonies.

The first regular lodge constituted in what is now the Dominion of Canada is at Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, dating from June 1738. The senior lodge in Ontario is Niagara No. 2, Niagara-on-the-Lake, (Niagara District A), originally known as St. John's Lodge of Friendship, warranted in 1782.

The Grand Lodge of Canada came into existence on the 10th October 1855, the first independent Grand Lodge in what is now the Dominion of Canada. At a special meeting held in the Masonic Hall in Hamilton, on the 2nd November 1855, the new Grand Lodge was duly constituted as *The Most Worshipful, The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada*, and M.W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson was installed as the First Grand Master. At the first Annual Communication held on 9th July 1856, there were 41 lodges in Canada East (now Quebec) and Canada West (now Ontario) with 1,179 members.

Upper and Lower Canada had been joined by the Act of Union in 1841, hence our original title as *The Grand Lodge of Canada*. Following Confederation in 1867, and as other provinces joined the original four (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Quebec), the new provinces formed their own Grand Lodges: Nova Scotia 1866; New Brunswick 1867; Quebec 1869; British Columbia and the Yukon 1871; Manitoba 1875; Prince Edward Island 1875; Alberta 1905; Saskatchewan 1906; Newfoundland and Labrador 1997. While a close bond of fraternal union exists among the ten Grand

¹ McLeod, Wallace. **Whence Come We? Freemasonry in Ontario 1764-1980.** p. 6

Lodges in Canada, which meet together once a year at the All Canada Conference, each Grand Lodge is sovereign and independent within its jurisdiction, working under and subject to its own constitution.

First recommended by a review committee in 1885, the present name, “**The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada, in the Province of Ontario**” became official when the Constitution was amended in 1887. And so it remains to the present day.

The Preamble to the Constitution of the Grand Lodge clearly defines its purpose and function: “*to form perfect fraternal union, to establish order, to insure tranquility, to provide for and promote the general welfare of the Craft, and to secure to the fraternity in the Province of Ontario all the blessings of Masonic privileges.*” Within this framework, the Grand Master and the elected Officers of the Grand Lodge are invested with the responsibility to **serve** the brethren and **protect** the Constitution.

We must be ever mindful that the essential unit of Freemasonry, vital to its existence, is the warranted lodge, “*just, perfect, and regular.*” In the constituent lodges, Freemasonry lives, moves and has its being, and flourishes or fails in direct proportion to the success of its component parts. When the first Grand Lodge was brought into existence in 1717, it had one purpose: to enable lodges working together in concert to achieve those things which they could not achieve working in isolation. That original purpose has not changed in the succeeding centuries during which hundreds of regular Grand Lodges have been formed throughout the world. Although often mistakenly viewed as a regulatory body enforcing central authority, the Grand Lodge is in reality a support system providing resources and assistance through the programs and projects of its several committees.

The Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario is made up of the Worshipful Masters, Wardens, and Past Masters of the constituent lodges currently working under warrant within the geographical boundaries of its jurisdiction. The Grand Master and the Officers of the Grand Lodge (listed in Section 11 of the Constitution) are democratically elected by the delegates registered at the Annual Communication from among the Past Masters in their number.

The work of Grand Lodge is published annually in PROCEEDINGS, a copy of which is sent to every lodge in the jurisdiction and is available to every member from the Grand Secretary’s Office at a nominal charge. It is a most valuable source of information, as it contains the Grand Master’s Address, committee reports, membership statistics, financial information, and fraternal reviews of sister jurisdictions around the world. All Proceedings from 1855 to the present are available on the web or may be

researched in the reference section of the Grand Lodge Library. Far from being a “*secret society*” as the uniformed insist, this demonstrates our transparency.

RSJD