

Notes on the History of Freemasonry in Canada
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A stone upon which had been cut a square and compass and the figures 1606 was found in the Annapolis Valley in 1827. The settlement now known as Annapolis was founded by the French, and French troops were there in 1603. Years later, a French Lodge in Paris, in a request for fraternal alliance with Albion Lodge in Quebec, wrote, "You have one of the most ancient temples of Freemasonry as its erection dates from 1721." No other records are in existence, but from the above it appears that the first Freemasons in Canada were Frenchmen who probably carried on up to, if not after, the conquest by the British in 1760.

The year 1738 is the accepted date of the institution of the first Lodge on what is now Canadian soil. To trace this we go to Massachusetts, where in 1730 a Provincial Grand Lodge received a warrant from the Grand Lodge of England. Here there is a record that Major Erasmus J. Phillips was made a Master Mason in 1737. The next year upon the petition of "sundry brethren of Annapolis-the city of Anne"- (occupied by the British in the reign of that queen), Provincial Grand Master, Henry Price, instituted the Lodge and appointed Major Phillips as Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Acadia, now Nova Scotia. In 1938 the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia observed its two hundredth anniversary with appropriate ceremonies. Distinguished brethren from the Old Land, who attended this celebration also visited British Columbia and were entertained by our Grand Lodge.

The first warrant for an all-Canadian Lodge was granted by the aforesaid Major Phillips to the Lodge of Halifax in 1750. The oldest writing connected with the Craft in Canada is the petition for this warrant, the first signature on which is that of the Hon.Ed. Cornwallis, then Governor of what is now Nova Scotia.

In Wolfe's army on the Plains of Abraham there were nine regiments with field warrants for the working of Lodges, and on the 27th December, 1759, they held a joint celebration of the Festival of St. John the Evangelist. In the following year the Worshipful Master and Wardens of the nine regimental Lodges met in convention to form a Grand Lodge, but before this could be completed the war ended and many of the regiments moved elsewhere. The civilian Lodges of Quebec, however, made application in 1760 to the Grand Lodge of England for a Provincial warrant. This was issued in 1762, but did not arrive in Canada till 1767. In that year a Provincial Grand Lodge was formed in Quebec, which then included what is now Ontario and much of the State of Michigan.

The strength of the Lodges in Quebec-Ontario was increased in large measure by the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists, many of whom were enthusiastic Freemasons.

In 1792 H.R.H. Prince Edward, Duke of Kent (father of Queen Victoria) who was in Canada, was appointed Provincial Grand Master for Lower Canada, and Rt.Wor. Bro. W. Jarvis was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Upper Canada. Both appointments came from Grand Lodge of England ("Ancients"), but it is worthy to note that Prince Edward was a "Modern" as well as an "Ancient." Rt.Wor. Bro. Jarvis came to the country to act as secretary to Governor Simcoe of Upper Canada.

The seat of Government was at Niagara and there the new Provincial Grand Master formed the Provincial Grand Lodge of Upper Canada.

Some dissension arose later when the seat of government was moved to York (now Toronto), and the Grand Master moved the Grand Lodge also. The result was the formation of a spurious Grand Lodge of Niagara, which resulted in much bitterness and lack of harmony in the Craft. In spite of this, however, some forty Lodges were warranted in Upper Canada in 1792 and 1812. The work of Masonic Lodges was almost entirely suspended during the war with the American States in 1812-1815, but it is pleasing to note that within six months after its close Lodge minutes record visits of American brethren to Canadian Lodges.

The Craft, however, did not prosper as it was thought it should have done. The Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland commenced to warrant Lodges in Canada, and by 1855 had some thirty Lodges here. There was much confusion, with the result that the Canadian brethren decided to form a Grand Lodge of Canada, so in October, 1855, a convention was held at Hamilton, Ontario, to which every Masonic Lodge of whatever origin was invited. Representatives from forty-one Lodges attended. The result was the formation of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada, with a constitution based on that of the Grand Lodge of England.

In view of past history, it is interesting to note that the officers of the Grand Lodge of Michigan came over and performed the ceremony of the Consecration of the Grand Lodge of Canada and installed the newly elected Grand Officers.