

FEBRUARY 2017

Ontario Freemasonry and Its Global Dimension

The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario was instituted on October 10, 1855 in Hamilton, Canada West.

Our title reflects our centuries-old heritage. The expression *Ancient Free* originated in England during the Middle Ages, when craftsmen were very skilled and indispensable to Church and State. They were not restricted in their movements and were “free” to do their work, travel and live their lives in a manner befitting their importance. In this period this freedom was very rare. Our legendary history carries this freedom from the “Operative Mason” back to 946, in York, in England. *Accepted Mason* also originated in England in the Middle Ages, when some men wanted to become Freemasons to obtain the advantages the craft had to offer. Not all wanted to build buildings but were recognized for other skills and accepted. As such they became known as “Accepted Masons” rather than “operative” or “ancient free” Masons. Over time there became more “Accepted” members as the building trades became more widely known. The words “of Canada” are correct as this was the first Grand Lodge in the United Province of Canada which had been formed in 1841 and consisted of Canada West and Canada East. In 1867 it was separated into the provinces of Ontario and Quebec which, along with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, confederated into the Dominion of Canada.

Today, Ontario’s Freemasons number about 42,000, organized into 541 Lodges grouped into 43 Districts, the whole forming Grand Lodge. Our Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother John C. Green is a member of Conestogo Lodge No. 295, of Drayton. Active in municipal politics he served as Mayor, Warden of Wellington County and as a member of the Police Commission, Board of Health and the Advisory Committee on Rural Planning for the Province and the Board of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. He was active in Kinsmen and served as National President of the Kinsmen. He has served on the Hospital Board for over 40 years, and is active in a number of other local and regional activities. He was made a Paul Harris Member from Rotary.

Ontario’s Grand Lodge building is located at 363 King Street West, Hamilton. Somewhere in your village, town or city may be a masonic temple, publicly named as such and which can be found in a telephone directory, or through virtually every electronic search engine. There is a belief that the institution is secret which is not true today and there are occasions when our lodges hold open houses and engage in dialogue with the public. There are also the many public charities openly supported by freemasons. What is true is that our meetings are usually private.

Dating from a historical period when few people could read and write, when men dominated societies and when membership in Freemasonry in some areas of the world could mean death, the institution has evolved with social changes. Today the “family of freemasonry” includes women’s components (Eastern Star, Daughters of the Nile), components for young girls (Rainbow Girls and Job’s Daughters) and boys (DeMolay). Over three centuries the men’s component has expanded to include many concordant and appendant bodies, for example, Royal Arch and Knights Templary, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite and the Shrine (Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine) some with particular ladies groups linked with them.

Our Grand Lodge is in amity (friendly relations) with many other Grand Lodges. Some of them cover a single country, such as the Grand Lodge of Norway, or they may have districts and

lodges in countries around the world (England, Ireland, Scotland). Others operate like Canada with independent Grand Lodges in their provinces or states (such as the USA, Brazil and Australia). Some organizations call themselves Masonic and are not recognized by our Grand Lodge and inter-visitation is not permitted. Before our members attend a lodge outside our Grand Jurisdiction they normally consult a listing of recognized Grand Lodges and may also carry a letter of introduction from the Secretary of their Lodge.

As prepared by Michael Jenkyns, Grand Historian, Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada
in the Province of Ontario

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