

Address to Maple – Granite Chapter No. 61

Early Freemasonry was an interesting fabric woven around Lodges and degrees, with firm links between today's Craft Lodges and RA Chapters, Mark Mason Lodges and Knight Templar Encampments (today's Preceptories). For at least 110 years, (or more), Lodges and Chapters were frequently formed by the same people—and until the mid nineteenth century Chapters worked under the authority of Lodge warrants. We have to bear this in mind.

Royal Arch Beginnings

The earliest references to Royal Arch Masonry date to the mid eighteenth century—a Dublin newspaper refers to a procession of Masons on St. John's Day, 1743. In the order of the procession is given: "Fourthly the Royal Arch carried by two excellent Masons."

Fifield Dassigny's *Serious and Impartial Enquiry into Freemasonry*, published in 1744 in Dublin, refers to the Royal Arch and the existence, in York, of an assembly of Master Masons under the title "Royal Arch Masons".

At the formation of the Supreme Chapter of the Grand Chapter of Scotland, in 1818, it was accepted that their probably oldest Chapters: Stirling, 1743; Montrose, 1765; Banff, 1766; and Linlithgow, 1788.

Scotland and Ireland predates England in terms of the Royal Arch. The Ancient Grand Lodge refers to the Royal Arch degree as early as March 1752 when the minutes show "The Masters of the Royal Arch to be summoned." Many of the Freemasons who established the Antients Grand Lodge were from Ireland and had taken their degrees there, their names exist on the Grand Lodge Register (and led many Moderns' Masons to refer the Antients as "Irish Masons").

It was only in the very twilight of their existence that the Moderns recognized the Royal Arch. At the union of the Antient and Modern Grand Lodges in England in 1813, a new Constitution stated that Freemasonry consisted of three degrees and three degrees only ... EA, FC and MM **including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem.**

To enter and attend the Quarterly Communication of the United Grand Lodge of England today requires that the individual be a Master Mason and a Royal Arch Companion.

The oldest minute of a Royal Arch Chapter in North America is dated 1753. The Chapter was held under the authority of the Warrant of the Lodge at Fredericksburg, Virginia (this is 30 years before the formation of the Lodge at Alexandria, Virginia, of which George Washington was both a member and Master).

At this time - prior to the independence of the New World colonies the Royal Arch was a one degree system roughly comparable to our Royal Arch degree in Ontario *after entering through and traversing the Veils*. It did not include the Mark, MEM, or other degrees. It is still a one-degree system in the English, Irish and Scottish systems.

Ontario

The Royal Arch degree (along with many others including the Knight Templar, Mark Master, Excellent Master and Super Excellent Master, degrees) arrived in Halifax (circa 1747) and Quebec (1759) with military Lodges and spread in several stages.

Stage I—The Provincial Grand Lodge of Quebec (Moderns) 1759-1792

Bro. James Thompson the Moderns Provincial Grand Secretary (Quebec) explained to a Nova Scotia colleague that they had had a Royal Arch Chapter working in Quebec from about 1760. But they suspended working about 1767 when they were informed of the formation of a "superior institution" in England in July 1767 called the Grand and Royal Chapter of Jerusalem. This body had written to all known RA Chapters (such as Thompson's) asking them to apply for a "proper" Warrant. (I presume this means that Thompson's Chapter would be a "time immemorial" one and had just "started up", probably sponsored by one of the Lodges in the Garrison at Quebec—Lodge No. 192 IC in the 47th Foot is considered as being a likely vehicle for the spread and support of Royal Arch Masonry in Quebec during the period.)

March 26, 1783, minutes of St. Andrew's Lodge, Quebec, refer to a Brother's funeral, ". . . having for Pall bearers, six Royal Arch Masons in their Regalia."

The Mark Master Mason degree was worked regularly in Quebec from about 1792 onwards in Mark Lodges held under authority of Warrants No. 9 ER(A) and 241 ER(A)—both in the Royal Artillery. Both these Lodges are alive and well, and working in Quebec City today as Albion No. 2 and St. John's No. 3.

Stage II—The Provincial Grand Lodge of Upper Canada (Ancients) 1792-1817

There were few people in Upper Canada until after the expulsion of the United Empire Loyalists from the American colonies. We have two major settled areas: western end of Lake Ontario and the eastern part of Lake Erie by Loyalist settlers crossing the Niagara frontier from the United States and a second one on the north shore of the St. Lawrence. Travel was usually by water - lakes and rivers forming natural "highways" for people and goods. Forts at Montreal, Kingston, Prescott, York, Hamilton, Newark and Fort Erie gave an impetus to settlement and provided a stability within which Lodges would meet, initiate civilian and military candidates, practice a variety of degrees and provide a fertile ground for the development of civilian Lodges.

In 1791 the "Province of Quebec" was divided into Upper and Lower Canada. William Jarvis, Secretary to the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, came to Upper Canada. Both were Freemasons. Jarvis carried with him a Patent from the Ancients naming him as Provincial Grand Master of Upper Canada and giving him authority to ". . . Grant Dispensations for the holding of Lodges and making Free Masons . . ." We know, from evidence regarding the Warrants issued that Jarvis exceeded his authority as he had issued Warrants, not just Dispensations, for the establishment of new Lodges—and this got Freemasons in the Province into trouble with London. As Provincial Grand Master, Jarvis was also concurrently the Superintendent of Royal Arch Masonry in Upper Canada and signed himself as such on Chapter Warrants.

The Province's first Royal Arch Chapter was Frontenac at Kingston (Instituted on November 24, 1795), operating under an amended Lodge Warrant (both issued by Jarvis) to permit the working of the Royal Arch. The Chapter is now Ancient Frontenac Chapter, No. 1, Kingston. The Chapter's minutes of April 17, 1801 first use the term Companion; the term Brother having been used prior to that date. The Chapter's By-Laws were enacted on April 19, 1805.

The earliest record of the Mark Degree is of November 7, 1796 minutes of The Barton Lodge at Hamilton. Union Mark Lodge was working at Grimsby by 1809 under a Lodge Warrant issued to Grimsby Lodge, No. 15 PRUC(A). The earliest references to the Past (also called the Pass and Passed) Master and Most Excellent Master degrees are contained in the minutes of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Upper Canada at its formation in 1822 when the "American working" for the Royal Arch degree was adopted.

In 1802 the Provincial Grand Lodge split into two parts - Jarvis's PGL at York and a schismatic Grand Lodge at Niagara. While chapters existed and worked in the latter there was no effort made to create a Grand Chapter.

By August 1817, there were at least six Mark Master Mason Lodges/Royal Arch Chapters conferring some or all of today's Mark Master Mason, Most Excellent Master and Royal Arch degrees. Only three now exist: Frontenac (now Ancient Frontenac and Cataraqui Chapter, No. 1, Kingston); St. John's Royal Arch Lodge at York (now St. Andrew and St. John Chapter, No. 4, Toronto); and The Hiram Chapter at Ancaster (now The Hiram, No. 2, Hamilton).

Stage III—Provincial Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Upper Canada 1817-1857

Jarvis died in August 1817 and left Masonic government in the province in a mess. Lodge representatives met in Kingston on August 27, 1817 and formed themselves into a Grand Masonic Convention to manage the affairs of Freemasonry. They met again the same day in respect of Royal Arch Masonry and formed themselves into a Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons. Officers were elected and it was agreed to adopt the customs practiced in the United States. Rules and regulations (some still in vogue today) were established: perhaps the most important was that then existing Chapters and Mark Lodges were to be formally separated from Craft Lodges.

On April 15, 1822 the Grand Lodge of England appointed Simon McGillivray, as Provincial Grand Master of Masons and *Superintendent of Royal Arch Masons for Upper Canada*. He was a well skilled Mason, and in 1813 he was the last Grand Junior Warden of the Moderns. He was also a personal friend of the new UGLE Grand Master, the Duke of Sussex. He sorted out the issues and problems confronting Freemasons and healed the schism which had occurred in 1802. His success brought together 18 eastern and western Lodges and sorted out the administrative issues with England. ***He left Royal Arch Masonry as he found it, due in part to its small size and because of the reality of the direct connection between Lodges and Chapters (resolving the problems of the Lodges would resolve any Chapter issues).***

The Provincial Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Upper Canada met "in full" in 1822, and Rev. Wm Smart was elected as Grand High Priest (holding that office in 1822, 1823 and 1824). By 1823, problems were being encountered and many members were unable to participate because of the physical difficulties of travel as well as the costs. In 1824 only one Grand Representative from each of eight Districts was required to attend and his expenses were paid by Grand Chapter. The Provincial Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Canada met again on February 10, 1824, ***for the last time until February 26, 1842***, a lapse of 18 years!

Until 1840 Masonic matters were managed on a day-to-day basis by Upper Canada brethren. They were also beset by problems from outside the Provincial Grand Lodge and Grand Chapter in the form of anti-Masonic feelings following the disappearance of Bro. Morgan from Batavia, New York (almost ¾ of Masonic bodies (Lodges, Chapters etc. closed forever); political agitation for representative government in Upper Canada which culminated in the abortive McKenzie Revolution in 1837 and an equivalent effort in Lower Canada in 1838; and the constant fear of American expansionism northwards. McGillivray died on June 9, 1840 without resolving any of the issues.

The Provincial Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Upper Canada may have met spasmodically between 1823 and 1842, like its Craft counterpart, the Provincial Grand Lodge of Upper Canada, which had met only in 1828 and 1829, and between 1829 and 1840 had ceased to meet at all. If it did so, there are no known surviving minutes of meetings.

In the midst of chaos, in 1839, R. W. Bro. Ziba Marcus Phillips took control of the Fraternity and convened a Grand Masonic Convention in Kingston on February 24, 1842. As with 1817, the delegates to the Convention first assembled to deal with the Craft. On September 17, some of these same representatives convened to look into issues surrounding the governance of Royal Arch Masonry.

In 1842, Phillips called the Provincial Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Upper Canada into being from Ancient Frontenac Chapter in Kingston and there were several Grand Chapter meetings. On February 7, 1844 the Provincial Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Upper Canada met in the Chapter Room in Smiths Fall.

Sir Alan Napier MacNabb was appointed as Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Canada West in 1842. Like Jarvis he was not a strong or skilled Mason and had rarely attended Lodge: his appointment by the Grand Master resulted from his strong position in provincial politics (he would serve as Prime Minister of the Province of Canada West by 1852). He rarely attended the PGL and his duties were exercised by his deputy. There is no clear evidence that he attempted to manage the affairs of Royal Arch Masonry.

As difficulties developed and expanded over time Irish and English warranted Lodges joined together and on October 10, 1855, in the Lodge Rooms of St. John's Lodge (Irish) in Hamilton, Canada West, a convention of delegates from 41 Lodges in Canada East and Canada West met and formed the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada and elected Most Worshipful Brother William Mercer Wilson as Grand Master.

It is important to recall that there were 83 Lodges working in Canada West and Canada East in 1855—*42 of them did not join the new Grand Lodge*. A parallel organization—the Ancient Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Canada, with R. W. Bro. Alan MacNab as Grand Master—was formed in the fall of 1857 and existed until July 14, 1858 when the two Grand Lodges were united. But even this did not account for all Lodges in the jurisdiction and some (such as St. John's Lodge, No. 159 IC (now No. 20A GRC), Vankleek Hill, working under an Irish Warrant) did not affiliate for many years.

Stage IV The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada 1858-present

By 1857 there were only 7 RA Chapters working in Canada (Canada East and Canada West, those in the Maritimes being under the authority of the Grand Chapters of England, Scotland or Ireland). These were, with their present numbers and date of origin: Ancient Frontenac (now No. 1), Kingston; Hiram (now No. 2), Hamilton; St. John's (now No. 3), London; St. Andrew and St. John (now No. 4), Toronto; St. George's (now No. 5), London; St. John's (now No. 6), Hamilton; and Moira (now No. 7), Belleville.

The successful organization and establishment of the new Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada (in spite of the existence of the parallel Ancient Grand Lodge of Canada) and its recognition by a number of other Grand bodies, encouraged the members of the Provincial Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Canada West to move for total independence. And it was in large measure the same people who had supported independence for Symbolic Masonry that also supported independence for Capitular Masonry.

The new Grand Master of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada, M. W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson, wrote each Chapter in Ontario which was linked to Lodges which belonged to the new Grand Lodge and invited them to a meeting in Hamilton, to be held in January 1857. Only three Chapters working in the Province sent representatives: St. John's at Toronto, Hiram at Ancaster and St. John's No. 231 IC at Hamilton. The "meeting" became a Convention when it was agreed that no single Grand Chapter exercised exclusive jurisdiction in Canada West (there were Chapters holding English, Irish and Scottish Warrants) and that members of any three or more Chapters could organize a Grand Chapter in any "unorganized territory." The Convention unanimously agreed to establish the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada. It also moved to adopt the Constitution of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of England **except that the principal offices would be elected annually and that the three degrees not recognized by the Grand Chapter of England (Mark Master, Past Master and Most Excellent Master Masons) degrees would be adopted by the new Grand Chapter as precursors to the Royal Arch degree.**

In the immediately ensuing elections the following officers were elected: - M. Ex. Comp. William Mercer Wilson of Simcoe as Grand First Principal (Z.); R. Ex. Comp. Aldis Bernard of Montreal as Grand Second Principal (H.); R. Ex. Comp. Thomas Duggan of Hamilton as Grand Third Principal (J.); R. Ex. Comp. Thomas Bird Harris of Hamilton as Grand Scribe Ezra; R. Ex. Comp. William Daniell of London as Grand Scribe Nehemiah; R. Ex. Comp. William Bellhouse of Hamilton as Grand Treasurer; and R. Ex. Comp. P. John Morrison of Hamilton as Grand Janitor.

The Convention re-assembled on April 2, 1857, again in Hamilton and M. Ex. Comp. Czar Jones, Past Grand High Priest of the State of Michigan proceeded to install and invest the Grand officers. It was a Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Michigan who had installed the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada M. W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson. Special note: When the Past Master degree was abolished in Ontario in 1894 some difficulties followed this decision. The Grand Chapter of Michigan, for example, did not "heal" with Canadian (Ontario) Royal Arch Masons residing in that state until April 23, 1947.

Michael Jenkyns, FCF
Maple-Granite Chapter, No. 61, Carleton Place, September 3, 2008

Ref.
Serious and Impartial Enquiry into Freemasonry, Fifield Dassigny published 1744 Dublin
Proceedings 89th Annual Convocation of the Grand Chapter of Royal Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario