

Allowing all Companions to be present in private Chapter at the opening of the Chapter

"That this Grand Chapter considers the advisability of allowing all Companions to be present in private Chapter at the opening of the Chapter" was a resolution discussed at the January Convocation.

The mover, in his explanatory remarks, said that it was impossible to state how the practice of excluding Companions who were not Principals from the opening ceremony originated. In 1817 the Royal Arch degree was a component part of what we now call the Installed Masters' degree, and an Installed Master had to take the chair in a lodge before he could take the Royal Arch degree. In the Installed Masters' degree, as now worked, brethren below that rank were not admitted, and naturally the practice of excluding Companions at the opening of a Chapter seemed to be a relic. Master Masons of six months' standing were now eligible to take the Royal Arch degree and there appeared to be no object in restricting the privilege to Principals only.

The Grand Scribe E. reported that, in accordance with instructions, he had communicated with the Supreme Grand Chapter of England and ascertained that a motion was passed in May, 1902, "That in the opinion of Supreme Grand Chapter, it is expedient that all Royal Arch Masons be permitted to be present at the opening of private Chapters"

That, of course, decided the question, but it may be added that Canada for many years did precisely as Victoria had done, and probably the shocking example may be traced to this corner of the globe, as our sister Grand Chapter may have had some of its earlier lessons from this source. It is recalled that when England made the change it arose out of the discovery that nearly forty years earlier an error had been made in a revision of the ceremony and the oversight had been blindly overlooked during all that long period, although there was not lacking a host of observant Companions who questioned the propriety of excluding all but the Principals from the opening preliminaries.

Sources:

Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada at the annual convocation, 1909 report on Foreign Correspondence - VICTORIA