

The Queen and the Flag - Symbols of Canada

True patriot love in all thy sons command

On February 15th 2008 we will celebrate the 43rd Anniversary of the first raising of the Maple Leaf, Canada's National Flag. Later this year, on July 1st 2008, Canadians will celebrate the 141st anniversary of Confederation which united the four British provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario under the terms of the British North America Act passed in Westminster in March 1867. The Dominion of Canada came into being. While we may be considered 'a young country' we are, in fact, the second-oldest federation after the American federation formed between 1776 and 1792.

The 'Chief Architect' and 'Father of Confederation,' R.W. Bro. Sir John A. Macdonald was the first Prime Minister. Five of his successors in office were Freemasons: Sir John J. C. Abbott (1891-1892), Sir Mackenzie Bowell (1894-1896), Sir Robert Laird Borden (1911-1920), Richard Bedford Bennett (1930-1935), and John George Diefenbaker (1957-1963).

Pierre Elliott Trudeau, in an address to the nation delivered in 1976, said: "*Our forefathers willed this country into being. Times, circumstances and pure will cemented us together in a unique national enterprise, by flying in the face of all expectations, of all experiences, of all conventional wisdom, that enterprise provides the world with a lesson in fraternity.*"

The perennial question, What is a Canadian? is formally answered and legally defined in the Oath of Citizenship: "*I swear (affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, according to law, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.*" (Secretary of State, 1977) Every Freemason is charged at his Initiation to "*fulfil the duties of a good citizen, and thereby set an example for others to emulate.*"

'The Maple Leaf, our emblem dear ...'

When the Flag of Canada is displayed in a Masonic Lodge, it is a symbol of patriotism - love of and loyalty to one's country. There is a difference between 'patriotism' and 'nationalism.' Although related, the terms are not synonymous. Nationalism, when carried to an extreme degree, is the prime cause of wars between nations. In a speech delivered on the day Canada's Flag was officially proclaimed and inaugurated in 1965, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson noted this difference. He expressed the hopes and ideals of all Canadians embodied in the Flag: "*Under this flag may our youth find new inspiration for loyalty to Canada, for a patriotism based not on any mean or narrow nationalism, but on the deep and equal pride that all Canadians will feel for every part of this great land.*"

This prayer was offered at the flag raising ceremony on Parliament Hill, February 15th 1965 by Georges P. Vanier, Governor General: "*Bless, O Merciful Father, this Flag and grant that this banner of our nationhood may proudly fly over a people devoted to the pursuit of righteousness, justice, and unity; whose faith and hopes are grounded in Thee, who art the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*"

Bro. John Ross Matheson, as Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister Pearson, played a formative role in the design of the Maple Leaf Flag and, after heated debate, was instrumental in its adoption. Bro. Matheson was initiated in Queen's Lodge No. 578 at Kingston in 1940 and was passed and raised in lodges in England while serving on active duty during World War II.

He was awarded the William Mercer Wilson Medal in 1988. In the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Ill. Bro. Matheson was coroneted an Honorary Inspector General, 33° and is a member of the Royal Order of Scotland. In his book, Canada's Flag: A Search for a Country (1980,1986) we read these inspiring lines: "*May the maple leaf, our emblem dear, continue to fly so long as the wind shall blow. May it be seen by all those on this spaceship Earth, as a signal from a kindly, caring, considerate people. For is it not written that the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" (The reference here is to the verse in the VOSSL - Revelation 22:2)

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee

Today, the National Flag reminds us of those Canadians serving in the Armed Forces, many of whom are our Masonic Brethren, engaged in deadly combat in Afghanistan, defending the peace and security of their homeland. Who among us cannot be moved by the sight of the flag-draped coffin of repatriation containing the body of a young man or woman, *Valiant hearts* that beat no more, each of whom has sacrificed life for Canadians. "*They shall not grow old - age shall not weary them - we will remember them.*"

In the Address delivered by M.W. Bro. William R. Pellow at the 133rd Annual Communication (1988), the Grand Master "*recommended that each lodge display, on standards, at least two flags in the lodge room. (a) The Canadian Flag (b) The Ontario Ensign. If the lodge is located within 100 km of the United States border and/or reciprocal visits with a United States lodge are a regular occurrence, then the flag of the United States of America should also be displayed. It is further recommended that at least one flag pole be erected on the grounds of each lodge. If one flag is present it should be the Canadian Flag.*" (Proceedings 1988, p. 26)

M.W. Bro. C. Edwin Drew, made reference to the singing of the National Anthem "*at many of our meetings*" in his Address to Grand Lodge in 1994. The Grand Master said: "*I encourage all Worshipful Masters to consider the singing of our National Anthem at **all** meetings.*" (Proceedings 1994, p. 34) The music of the anthem was composed by Calixa Lavallée (1842-1891) for a concert in Quebec City celebrating St-Jean-Baptiste Day, June 24th 1880, when it was first played by a band. The English words were written by Robert Stanley Weir (1856-1926) and modified when Parliament passed the National Anthem Act on June 27th 1980 as the official national anthem and proclaimed on July 1st 1980. At the same time 'God Save the Queen' was designated the Royal Anthem.

Protocol dictates that the Flag of Canada is placed to the right of the presiding officer - in the East to the right of the Worshipful Master. When the National Anthem is sung at the conclusion of a lodge meeting, the National Flag should be the focus of the Brethren. Many lodges display a formal picture of Queen Elizabeth II, our Sovereign Lady. If possible, it should be mounted on the east wall in close proximity to the flag, When the Royal Anthem is sung or a Toast is proposed to the Queen and the Craft, in lodge, at the festive board, or at banquets and receptions, it is proper to face the portrait of Her Majesty as the Queen of Canada.

Maple Leaf Pin

The maple leaf was considered the emblem of Canada as early as the 1830s. The distinctive lapel pin with the red Canadian Maple Leaf and the gold square and compasses superimposed was introduced and authorized to be worn by all Masons in this Grand Jurisdiction in 1994.

Charge to the Flag

This Charge was given by the R.C.M.P. Degree Team which was under the direction of V.W. Bro. Donald H. Mumby, subsequently M.W. Bro., the Grand Master 2003 - 2004.

*I present our Flag, our symbol of Unity and Sovereignty -
Between bars of red, and on a field of white
It blazons forth in its full Autumnal glory.*

THE CANADIAN MAPLE LEAF

Whose points represent the Provinces and Territories.

To Freemasons,

*The red symbolizes the dauntless courage of our forefathers,
which we strive to emulate;
The white, that blameless purity of life and conduct
to which we aspire;
And the points, the eleven knightly virtues, of which Patriotism is the greatest,
and to which we are ever dedicated;
And finally, it inspires in us a reverence to Him,
to Whom we fervently pray ...*

God Save the Queen and Heaven bless the Maple Leaf Forever

(quoted by M.W. Bro. C. Edwin Drew, Grand Master's Address, Proceedings 1995, p. 34)

FURTHER READING

I Stand For Canada: The Story of the Maple Leaf Flag. Rick Archbold (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross, 2002)

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