

A GRAND LODGE CERTIFICATE

Prepared by R. W. Bro. W. E. McLeod – Mizpah Lodge No. 572

As a Master Mason, you are entitled to receive from Grand Lodge a certificate that you have been regularly Initiated, Passed and Raised. I now present to you your certificate, and if you will examine it, I shall explain its symbolism.

At the top is a panel encircled by a floral border, in which the thistle, shamrock, and rose entwine the maple leaf. This recalls to our mind that England, Scotland, and Ireland bequeathed to Canada not only the basis of our political institutions but also the blessings of our gentle Craft. The panel consists of several distinct emblems. It is headed by the All-seeing Eye, in rays of brilliant light. This signifies that our lives are illuminated and our actions are observed, by the beneficent Creator. Beneath this are the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom, surmounted by the Crown and flanked by the lion and the unicorn. They symbolize the loyalty to authority which must characterize every Mason.

Below this is the Great Seal of the Province of Canada as it was used from 1841 to 1867, the period in which our Grand Lodge came into being. The Province was formed by the union of Upper Canada (or Ontario) and Lower Canada (or Quebec), and the seal alludes to both. In the centre, in an oval panel, are two classically robed maidens arm in arm, allegorical figures for Lower Canada and Upper Canada. At their sides, partly obscuring them, are two roundels or medallions. To the left is the Great Seal of Lower Canada (1793-1841). It is intended to be a stylized view of Quebec City, with a church on the hill, as seen from across the St. Lawrence River. In the foreground stands a freshly pruned oak tree, and in the river float two sailboats. (Quebec was of course the capital city of Lower Canada.)

The significance of the pruned tree is now obscure, but it was originally explained by a Latin motto: the province would be stronger and richer after Upper Canada, formerly a constituent part, had been pruned away.)

The right-hand medallion carries the Great Seal of Upper Canada (1792-1841), which was designed by our first Lieutenant-Governor, Lieutenant-Colonel (and Brother) John Graves Simcoe. It includes an anchor crossing a sword, with a feathered calumet or Indian peace pipe upright between them, all over two crossed cornucopias or horns of plenty; above them are the Royal Crown and the lower left corner of the old Union Jack, as it was before 1801 when the Cross of St. Patrick was added. The whole design points out to us that the colony, with its bounteous agricultural promise, was established by the British Naval and Military Forces, in conjunction with their Indian allies.

To the left of the Great Seal is a stylized view of what seems to be Hamilton, apparently from Burlington Beach, looking towards the Mountain. It was of course in Hamilton, on 10 October 1855, that the sovereign Grand Lodge of Canada was formed, and the headquarters, the administrative offices of the Grand Lodge have been situated in the city ever since. In the foreground of the scene, on the shore of the isthmus, is a beaver, the emblem of Canada ever since the early days of the fur trade. To the right of the Great Seal is a scene that holds a threefold significance – Niagara Falls as viewed from the shore. This natural wonder is recognized all over the world as a landmark of Ontario; moreover, it was not too many miles from here that Freemasonry was first implanted in our province, in 1780 or before. But even beyond that, it was in Niagara Falls, Canada West, on 19 July 1855, that a group of brethren resolved to call the meeting in Hamilton that resulted in independence.

This panel at the top serves to remind us of our heritage and our faith, and that our Grand Lodge antedates Confederation, and originally covered the whole Province of Canada. For that reason, it was at first called simply The Grand Lodge of Canada. Not until after Confederation, when the independent Grand Lodge of Quebec had broken away – in fact, not until 1887 – were the words “in the Province of Ontario” added.

The emblems in the lower part of the certificate are all familiar to Masons. They derive from the form of certificate which has been issued by the United Grand Lodge of England ever since 1820. Most conspicuous are the Three Great Pillars that support a Freemason's Lodge. That on the left is Ionic, that on the right is Doric, and that in the centre is Corinthian.

In masonry, they are called Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty, and represent Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif.

The pillars rest on square pedestals, adorned with the Three Movable Jewels. On the left is the Square, denoting the Master; on the right the Level, denoting the Senior Warden; and in the centre is the Plumb-rule, denoting the Junior Warden.

These pedestals rest on the Black and White Mosaic Pavement of the lodge, which represents the Light and Darkness, the joys and sorrows, of our chequered existence on earth. The pavement is approached by three stairs of degrees. Towards the back of the Pavement are the Celestial and Terrestrial Globes, which point our Masonry Universal. Formerly they were a regular feature in the lodge room, but have fallen into disuse in this country, although they may still be found on the wardens' columns.

Leaning against the centre pedestal are the Three Great Lights: the open Volume of the Sacred Law, to rule and govern our Faith; the Square, to regulate our lives and actions; and the Compasses, to keep us within due bounds with all mankind. To the left foreground is the Rough Ashlar, a stone rude and unpolished as taken from the quarry. In order to shape it for the intended structure, the entered apprentice employs the Chisel and the Mason's Maul, which are shown reposing on it. To the right foreground is the Perfect Ashlar, the stone made ready by the hands of the Craftsmen.

From its top protrudes a metal ring, part of a lifting device called a Lewis, which is another old Masonic symbol. In the centre foreground are the twenty-four inch gauge and the pencil, which are used by the Master to lay lines and draw designs on the Tracing Board.

Between the pillars, in the right hand space, is a printed text stating that the Brother named (that is, you) had been regularly Initiated, Passed, and Raised. A Latin version appears in the right-hand space. In former days, Latin was the language of international diplomacy, and even if you went to a land where English was not spoken, men would still know from the Latin that you were a regularly made Mason. Latin had been used on English Craft certificates since about 1766. It was dropped in England in 1964, but we have retained it in Canada.

The year of your Initiation is entered twice. It is given as A.D., that is Anno Domini, “in the year of our Lord” the form of dating in general use. Before that it is A.L., that is Anno Lucis, “in the year of Light.” This is the Masonic Era, which is calculated by adding 4,000 to the Common Era. Traditionally, it alludes to the date of man's creation. It still serves to remind us that the origins of Freemasonry go back to time immemorial.

At the bottom, by way of authentication, the Grand Secretary has subscribed his name and affixed the seal of Grand Lodge. You will find a full discussion of the seal and its symbolism on pages 150-153 of *Beyond the Pillars*. In brief, it indicates that our Grand Lodge is the Canadian offshoot of the United Grand Lodge of England; that we revere the Great Architect of the Universe; that the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple is at the centre of our symbolism; and that we watch our ceremonies and listen to them but do not reveal them.

Your certificate is not yet complete, for it requires that you sign your name in the space provided in the margin. This space has the Latin words "Ne Varietur", which means "Not to be altered". If you find a certificate in which the signature has been altered you must treat the man who bears it as a Masonic impostor. You will now approach the Secretary's desk and append your signature to your certificate.

(D.D.G.M.'s notes: The Latin text no longer appears on the certificates issued by the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario.)

Acknowledgements: The general outline of the address and the discussion of the Masonic symbols are taken from the Appendix to the published Emulation Ritual as demonstrated in the Emulation Lodge of Improvement. For earlier forms of the certificate, see T.O. Haunch, "English Craft Certificates", AQC82 (1969) 169-253. On the Great Seal of Canada, see Conrad Swan, *Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty* (Toronto, 1977), pages 105-112, 163-169; George W. Spragge, "The Great Seals and the Mail" for 25 September, and 9 October 1976. The writer is grateful to the Grand Secretary's Office, for providing copies of two letters written on the subject by M. W. Bro. W. J. Dunlop, under dates of 27 October 1948, and 20 May 1950; and also to R. W. Bros. George A. Revell and James J. Talman for other information and suggestions.