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SECTION 21 – OVERVIEW OF GRAND LODGE

21.1 History

Military lodges were active in the spread of Freemasonry throughout both the United States and Canada. A number of military lodges were warranted by the Grand Lodges of Ireland, Scotland and England, the first being warranted by the Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1732. Military lodges, however, were strictly cautioned not to interfere with the Masonic jurisdiction of any country in which they were stationed. Military lodges contributed to the remarkable extension of the Order in the overseas possessions to which the soldiers were sent. Without them, Freemasonry would probably have developed at a much slower pace or not survived at all. "Travelling Warrants" are almost synonymous with the organization of military lodges, and were so called because the lodges which acted under them were permitted to travel from place to place with the regiments to which they were issued. Such warranted lodges were primarily responsible for spreading Freemasonry in North America.

The Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario was formed in 1855 in Hamilton. The administrative headquarters are located in the Grand Lodge Memorial Building, 363 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario. The building is also the home of the Masonic Foundation, the Office of Royal Arch Masonry, the Scottish Rite Cathedral and the Supreme Council Office. It is truly a Masonic block.

There have been many questions posed over the years, with respect to Our Grand Lodge: How is it composed?, How does it function?, What happens at the Annual Meeting?, or as it is called, The Annual Communication.

As the name suggests, our Grand lodge has jurisdiction for Craft Masonry throughout the Province of Ontario. That responsibility is accepted and honoured by other Masonic Grand Lodges throughout the World.

The Province is divided into Masonic Districts, each with their own representative of the Grand Master, known as a District Deputy Grand Master. Depending on its geographic size, each district may have from 7 to 25 lodges.

21.2 Tracing Our Masonic Roots

Freemasonry is **not** a secret society, but rather a fraternal association of men of good will and high ideals. There is little about Freemasonry that cannot be shared with the community. We are simply members of a society with a few secrets - this is a point we Masons must not forget! We are on public view at Masonic church services and funerals. We strive to make our charitable work better known, whether it be local assistance to a worthy cause, or province-wide through the work of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario. Masons are encouraged to share their feelings about being a Mason with their family and neighbours, and to discuss Freemasonry and its objectives with them. Masonic tradition, however, discourages direct recruitment. This sets Freemasonry apart from service clubs and similar organizations.

Freemasonry recognizes each individual's right to his own beliefs and practices. For this reason, Masons are not allowed to discuss matters of religion or politics within the lodge. Freemasonry also recognizes that each member has obligations to his family, his work, his religious beliefs, his community, and himself. These must take priority and Freemasonry does not interfere with his ability to meet these obligations.

In one sense, Freemasonry is very old. The word mason actually means "builder in stone." There have been builders in stone for thousands of years, even earlier than the Great Pyramids in Egypt. While our usages and customs can be so traced, this does not mean that Freemasonry itself can be traced back to the philosophies of ancient Egypt. From the dawn of time, there have been stonemasons and there have been innumerable fellowships which have taught lessons of morality by means of allegory. Both could be called the forbearers of Freemasonry, but no conclusive link has been traced. However, we can trace our "roots" back to the London Company of Freemasons, the first trade guild of Masons, which was founded in 1376, over 600 years ago. Therefore, modern Freemasonry claims to be descended in an unbroken line from the craft masons who erected the great stone Gothic cathedrals of Britain. We cannot go earlier than that.

Some of the more decorative portions of these edifices were carved in a kind of material called freestone, which is comparatively soft when it comes from the quarries, but which hardens on exposure to air. The men who possessed the necessary skills to work this material were known as freestone-masons, often abbreviated to freemasons.

Even in those far-off days there was a form of quality control. The work had to be carried out in accordance with rigid standards, and to ensure such there were regular inspections. The Masons formed themselves into organizations that would see that the workmen were properly trained and fully responsible. Copies of some of their regulations still exist, and we know that these included matters of morality as well as the administration of the building craft. Some of these groups of workmen were organized into Guilds (which were usually located in the cities), and others met in Lodges, named from the "lodge" or hut, usually on the south side of the building project, utilized by the craftsmen.

The word "lodge" has actually been used in a number of senses. In its primary Masonic sense, it appears in documents of the 13th century and later to describe the workshop or hut in which the operative masons worked, stored their tools, ate their meals and rested. At locations where building construction was continuously in progress, the lodge acquired a more permanent character, giving rise to a more extended meaning, so that "lodge" began to imply a group of masons permanently attached to a particular work project. The word "lodge" appeared in a third, and more advanced sense, in Scotland in the 16th century, where it was used to describe the working masons of a particular town or district, organized to relate to the affairs of their trade.

There were several different levels or ranks among the workers. Most of them would be fellows of the craft, skilled craftsmen who had served an apprenticeship, and had proven their proficiency. In many work-sites there would be a few apprentices, beginners, who were learning the necessary techniques, but were not yet fully qualified. Then, in charge of the project would be the Master Mason, who was also the architect, the man who drew up the plans.

As mentioned above, the London Company of Freemasons is the principal connecting link in the chain of evidence which indicates that the modern social cult known as "Free and Accepted Masons" is lineally descended from the old fraternity of operative masons which built the Gothic edifices of the middle ages. To facilitate reconstruction in the aftermath of the Great Fire of London in 1666, however, the freedom of London was granted in 1667 to anyone in the construction trade. Those benefits had previously been available to craftsmen only through the guilds. As a result, the Company's domination of the trade was effectively broken, and it could no longer finance its activities by admission fees alone, hence it reverted to the old custom of collecting a quarter age. This levy could be viewed as a forerunner of our practice of semi-annual returns and payments to Grand Lodge.

Over the years, as construction methods changed, the need for buildings made of stone declined and so did the need for the guilds and lodges. In order to preserve the moral and other benefits offered to society by these Masonic organizations, the lodges began to admit members who were not practising stonemasons. These new members, whose standards of behaviour had to match those of the "operatives", were known as "accepted" masons. As time went on, lodges came to have fewer and fewer stonemasons, and more and more "non-operatives" or speculatives. It was from these "mixed" lodges that modern Freemasonry descends. Today we refer to ourselves as Ancient Free and Accepted Masons - "Free" in allusion to the operative freemasons, "Accepted" in reference to the non-operatives who joined, and "Ancient" because our history goes back so far.

To summarize, there were three key stages through which the change passed:

1. Permanent organizations (guilds), performing certain trade functions, into which non-operatives could join, but they were not numerous.

2. Lodges of accepted masons during the 17th and 18th centuries, whose main interest was probably antiquarian.
3. Speculative lodges, at which the readings from the Old Charges and other ceremonies of the accepted mason were replaced by the teaching of a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. It is impossible to say at what point the transition from accepted to speculative began.

Modern Freemasonry was founded in England when four lodges banded together in the year 1717. The date of June 24 (St. John the Baptist's Day), 1717, marked the formal beginning of modern Speculative Freemasonry with the assembly and feast of the Free and Accepted Masons at the Goose and Gridiron Ale House, from which we derive our traditions of a regular Annual Communication to choose officers and of the Grand Master's Banquet. From Britain it spread over much of the world. Within twenty years, for example, the Craft had travelled to North America with the military forces and the colonists. Over the centuries, Freemasonry has played a significant role in our culture and civilization. Its members have included kings and princes, as well as leaders in politics, commerce, religion and the arts.

The first recorded lodge in North America was St. John's Lodge in Boston, Massachusetts, formed on July 30, 1733. The first lodge to appear in Canada was formed in June 1738 at Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. The second lodge was First Lodge, Halifax, formed on July 19, 1750, and is still working as St. Andrew's Lodge No. 1, Grand Registry of Nova Scotia.

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21.3 Applying The Working Tools Of Speculative Masonry

Reflect on the symbolic working tools you have at your disposal and use them to their fullest. They offer lessons for day-to-day living with others.

The Lesson of the Twenty-four Inch Gauge, the first Working Tool put into our hands, is to allocate our time among worship, family, work, relaxation and self-improvement in a manner that, in our best judgement, is appropriate. It symbolizes the twenty-four hours of the day and is, therefore, a symbol of the passage of time and, in particular, of time well spent. Time is a precious and irreplaceable commodity which always seems to be in short supply. As an Entered Apprentice, we were advised to use our time wisely, both in our public and private activities. We must always strive for a perfect balance, so that one activity does not suffer at the expense of another. Each new day will bring an opportunity to apply your Twenty-four Inch Gauge. Manage your time wisely.

Use your symbolic Chisel and Gavel as a professional would. The Chisel symbolizes the effects of education on the mind. By cultivating ideas and polishing rude thoughts, education discovers the latent virtues of the mind and draws them forth. As you work and develop, continually sharpen your Chisel, applying your skills and talents to smooth the rough edges of life. The Gavel is made use of to break off the corners of the rough ashlar to better fit the builder's need. It symbolizes the duty of divesting our minds and consciences of all the vices and impurities of life. Remember the lesson of the Gavel that repeated effort is required to complete this work.

The working tools of a Fellowcraft - the Square, the Level and the Plumb Rule - are extremely important in the building trade. You will recall from the Junior Warden's Lecture in the Entered Apprentice Degree that they are referred to as the "movable jewels", because they are worn by the Master and his two Wardens and are transferable to their successors. Their proper use will enable you to test your work.

The Square teaches the lesson of morality. The Fellowcraft, therefore, is to regulate all his actions by the Square, thereby harmonizing his conduct towards others with the principles of morality and virtue. Adherence to these principles requires us to be good men and true, and exhorts us to be fair and honest in our dealings with others. Always act on the Square. Be predicable and you will be understood and appreciated. Be patient and understanding with the Brethren, especially the younger Brethren. They need your help as we need theirs. They are the future of our Craft.

The Level offers the lesson of Equality and teaches that all men are subject to the same infirmities, striving to attain the same goals and preparing to be judged by the same law. In spite of the necessary divisions and levels of responsibility which are essential if the work of the world is to be efficiently performed, as Masons, we are taught to apply goodwill, charity, tolerance and truthfulness to all men equally. Within Freemasonry, all men travel the same road, undertake the same obligations and share the same rights and privileges. As you have your own unique talents to offer, however,

so do your Brethren. Each of us is engaged, in our own way, in promoting the Craft and its work, and in perpetuating its principles. You are an equal partner in that effort. Be consistent in your dealings with others.

The Plumb Rule instructs us to be just and upright and not to bend beneath the frowns of adversity nor yield to the seductions of prosperity, but rather to be steadfast in the pursuit of truth. Stand upright as a true Plumb in life and action. Be confident in your dealings and decisions. Strive to judge fairly. Let your actions speak out as loudly as your words. The world will recognize you for what you are by those actions. To be respected and loved in our relationships with family and in our dealings with friends, society and brethren, shall be our reward. In short, as Masons, we strive to practise what we preach.

To these are added the working tools of a Master Mason: the Skirret, the Pencil and the Compasses. They help us to recall that the Supreme Being has revealed his will to man, and that we are to bear His laws in mind and act in accordance with them. As the string line attached to the Skirret is used to mark out a straight chalk line on the ground, so does the Volume of the Sacred Law lay down for us a straight and undeviating line of conduct. The Pencil is used by the operative Mason to draw architectural designs and to make notes. Symbolically, it reminds us that our words and actions are observed and recorded by the Almighty Architect, to whom we must all give an account of our conduct through life. The Compasses are used for the measurement of the architect's plans, and to enable him to give those just proportions which will ensure beauty and stability in his work. They remind us of the limits of good and evil defined for us by God, and His unerring and impartial justice in rewarding or punishing according to whether His divine commands have been obeyed or disregarded. They further instruct us to circumscribe our passions and limit our desires, to observe the line of perfect moderation and to keep within due bounds with all mankind.

The Memorials and Memories that you leave behind will be those made with these symbolic tools. Words and promises are fine, but remember, like any tool, they will rust with inactivity. You and you alone can optimize their use. With the assistance and counsel of your Brethren and your own efforts, you will master the Masonic skills which will enable you to transform your figurative Rough Stone into a stone of beauty. Just as we build upon the foundation laid by Masons who came before us, so will future workmen use your figurative stone to try and perfect their own jewels, or Masonic skills, and thereby continue to advance the cause of Freemasonry.

21.4 Exactly What, or Who, Makes Up Grand Lodge?

In the answer to that question, there is no "What", There is only the "Who", because Grand lodge consists only of people. Except when referring to the people who comprise Grand Lodge, the words themselves are adjectives for things like Grand Lodge Office, Grand Lodge Publication, or Grand Lodge Annual Meeting.

21.5 Who are the People that Make Up Grand Lodge?

There are a good many, more than you probably think! First there are the Grand Lodge Officers, each of whom must be a Past Master, and then there are the Past Grand Lodge Officers. Then all the Worshipful Masters, the Past Masters, the Senior and Junior Wardens. One stipulation is that they belong to a Lodge on the Grand Lodge Registry which has duly made its return payments.

You could in fact say that any Mason entitled to “Worshipful” in his Masonic identification plus any member who is a “Warden”, is a member of Grand Lodge. As you can see there are thousands of members of Grand lodge. The Masters and Wardens would total three times the number of lodges and if we estimate 20 Past Masters per Lodge, and the average is likely higher, you soon come to realize that thousands of members make up Grand Lodge.

Before looking closer at the first group mentioned earlier, the Grand Lodge Officers, let's establish that the annual Meeting is by no means for the Members of Grand Lodge only! Part of the Agenda, as soon as the meeting is opened, is to invite all Master Masons to enter. Any Mason, in good standing is not denied entrance to the meeting

Although we do not have an exact count of how many Grand Lodge Members there are, we do know that 183 of them are Grand Lodge Officers.

The Grand Master and the Deputy Grand Master head the list, followed by the Past Grand Masters. Next there are the District Deputy Grand Masters, and others who hold office quite similar to those of our Lodge Officers, i.e. Grand Chaplain, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon, and so on.

In addition there are Grand Stewards appointed for the current year.

Finally we have the Honourary, Elected and Appointed Members of the Board of General Purposes, who are also Grand Lodge Officers.

The Grand Lodge Officers are either elected by the Membership of Grand Lodge or appointed by the Grand Master. Appointments are made in recognition of the performance of duties for the benefit of the Craft. **Using that same criterion is likely our best guideline in electing officers as well.**

21.6 The Positions Filled by Election Are:

- Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master
- Grand Senior Warden, Grand Junior Warden, Grand Registrar
- Grand Treasurer, Grand Secretary
- The District Deputy Grand Masters, each representing a Masonic District
- 14 Members of the Board of General Purposes

Elections are held every 2 years for the positions of Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, Grand Treasurer, and Grand Secretary. 7 Members of the Board of General Purposes are elected each year and all other positions filled by election are done so annually

21.7 Who Conducts the Affairs of Grand Lodge?

Moving on to the function of Grand Lodge, 'Who' actually conducts its affairs and how is it done?

The affairs of Grand Lodge, and of Craft Masonry are ultimately the concern of the current Grand Master. To assist him and to provide continuity for the Order, there is the Grand Lodge office in Hamilton. Our records are maintained there and the day-to-day business is conducted there by an experienced staff.

Essential to this process is the Grand Secretary who manages the Grand lodge office, but also provides a depth of experience and knowledge of Masonic affairs from which the whole Craft draws guidance.

In performing his duties the Grand Master delegates responsibilities to his Officers and must rely on his District Deputy's in particular to represent him and Grand Lodge, throughout the jurisdiction.

21.8 The Board of General Purposes

Next there is the Board of General Purposes which has a major role in the functioning of Grand Lodge. The Board of General Purposes is the administrative and executive body of Grand Lodge. The President is the Deputy Grand Master. This includes the Grand Master, and all Past Grand Masters

Five other Grand Lodge Officers are Members, as are the 46 District Deputy Grand Masters. In addition, there are 3 other categories of Board Members namely Elected, Appointed and Honourary. There are 14 members elected. Their term of office is 2 years and they may be re-elected. The terms are staggered so that (7 are elected during each Grand Lodge Communication. The 2 other groups, the Appointed and Honourary Members, are placed on the Board by the Grand Master. There are currently 14 appointed Members, the maximum allowable, and seven Honourary, also the maximum allowable. A term of Office for appointed is 2 years, and 3 years for the Honourary. Terms of the Members of both groups may be renewed.

The Constitution assigns to the Board "The General Care and Regulation of Grand Lodge." Most of its work is done through a number of Committees, each with special responsibilities. There are presently Standing Committees, each specified by the Constitution, and Special Committees.

The Committee Chairman and Members are announced soon after the Grand Lodge Annual Communication. While most Committee Chairmen are drawn from the Board Membership, all Master Masons are eligible to serve.

The Board of General Purposes has two Meetings per year, two days prior to the Grand Lodge Annual Meeting on the Monday and Tuesday.

21.9 The Management Committee

One of the Standing Committees is the Management Committee. The powers and duties of this Committee are defined by the Constitution, as are the powers and duties of all Standing Committees.

Briefly this Committee is to act in an advisory capacity to the Grand Master and Grand Lodge in all matters deemed to be in the best interest of, and for the better administration of the Craft. The Management Committee usually meets monthly.

The composition of the Management Committees is: The Grand Master (ex-officio), the Deputy Grand Master (ex-officio) who is Chairman of the Committee, the Grand Secretary (ex-officio), the Chairman of the Committee on Audit and Finance (ex-officio), Two Members of the Board of General Purposes appointed by the Grand Master for a term of three years, three members of the Board elected by the Honourary, Elected and Appointed Members of the Board of General Purposes from amongst their own number for a term of three years.

21.10 Advisory Group

The Advisory Group provides a forum for communication among its members, reviews Grand Lodge Committee activities and makes recommendations to the Management Committee. It meets at the call of its Chairman, the Deputy Grand Master.

The Advisory Group is comprised of the following members: The Grand Master (ex-officio), the Deputy Grand Master, the Grand Secretary, the Grand Treasurer, the thirty-five honorary, elected and appointed members of the Board of General Purposes and the Past Grand Masters.

21.11 The Annual Communication

Constitutionally, the Annual Communication must convene "In the forenoon of the third Wednesday in July ", at a time establish by the Grand Master, and at a place determined by the Board of General Purposes. Assembly is at 8:30 a.m., but for many Members the event starts several days earlier.

The Members of the Board of General Purposes meet all through Monday and on Tuesday morning. Tuesday afternoon is devoted to Seminars on various subjects aimed at improving skills that benefit the Craft.

By the time the Annual Communication starts, the Staff at the Grand Lodge office, the various Committees, and others who plan and prepare for it, have spent many, many days getting things ready.

What about other Members who are coming to the Annual Communication, and are not involved in preparations or presentations? Many of them arrive in time to attend the Seminars on Tuesday afternoon and to register that evening. Many more are interested in the "Happenings", the actual "Business" of the Annual Communication, and for the Fellowship which is the hallmark of Masonry.

The Pomp and Ceremony on the opening of Grand Lodge, on the Wednesday morning, is an event which Masons should not miss.

There is a fixed Agenda, which calls for the Grand Master's address shortly after the Meeting convenes. This is one of the highlights of the Meeting as the Grand Master reviews the salient events and trends that have taken place in the past year. He also makes his observations on what the future holds for Masonry. The Grand Master's address is followed by any communications, petitions or appeals that are to be presented. Then the reports of the Auditor, the Grand Treasurer and the Grand Secretary. The District Deputy Grand Masters' reports are referred to, and then the Chairman of each Committee of the Board presents his report to the Membership for discussion, if any, and for acceptance. The next order of business is Notice of Motions followed by General Business.

21.12 The Election and Investiture of Grand Lodge Officers

The Wednesday meeting adjourns in the afternoon in time for Members to attend their own District Meeting at which they elect their District Deputy Grand Master for the ensuing Masonic year.

Wednesday evening is highlighted by the Grand Master's Banquet at which Masonic Fellowship and Pageantry are at their finest. In addition to an entertainment program, this event is enhanced by a guest speaker who provides a memorable and meaningful message to those assembled.

The Grand Lodge Meeting reconvenes Thursday morning, starting from where it adjourned on Wednesday afternoon. Highlights of the second morning session include election results and special appointments, as well as the Installation and Investiture of the new Officers of Grand Lodge.

21.13 The “Proceedings”

Everything that is said or done at the Annual Communication of Grand Lodge, plus a wealth of other information, is published in the annual "Proceedings". The "Proceedings" provide information from the Grand Masters' Address, to Committee Reports, to Fraternal Correspondence from Grand Lodges throughout the World.

Overall this provides a record of all aspects of Masonry. This invaluable 'aid', may be purchased from the Grand Lodge office, usually in November of each year, or better still, borrow it from your Lodge Secretary.