

A Brief History of Freemasonry in Nova Scotia

by Chronicle Herald

The
ChronicleHerald.ca

Published on October 18th, 2008

Freemasonry. Masonry. The Craft. These words all refer to the same thing, the oldest Fraternal Organisation on earth, traditionally held to have grown from the rough organisation of the stoneworkers who helped

Of course, we know that our factual history does not go back quite so far. The earliest confirmable traces of the organisation that became Freemasonry grew out of the English Guilds and Scottish "Incorporations" of the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries via a slow process of admitting "gentlemen and others of quality" to membership in the purely Operative, or "working Masons" of the stonemason's trades. In the process of slowly changing from what was, in a way, a forerunner of a modern trade union into the philosophical and fraternal organisation of today, the simple tools of the stonemasons, the men who built such achievements as St. Paul's in London, York Minister in York, Salisbury Cathedral in Salisbury and Chartres Cathedral in France, were transformed into philosophical symbols of a kind of life that rose above the difficulties of reality and focused its participants on following the inspirational teachings of the great religions of the world.

In 1717, in the city of London, England, this movement organised itself into the first Grand Lodge and from that early start, Freemasonry spread across the world. It reached Nova Scotia at Annapolis Royal in 1738 with Major Erasmus James Philipps, an officer in the 40th Regiment of Foot and a nephew of the Royal Governor of the Province, Col. Richard Philipps, who was appointed to be Provincial Grand Master for Nova Scotia by authority of the senior Masonic authority in North America, Henry Price, a former resident of London and then resident of Boston and Provincial Grand Master for North America.

From that early start, slowly and not without difficult times due to war, weather and distance, and with the active assistance of the first Grand Lodges in England, Scotland and Ireland, the rich traditions of Freemasonry spread across the Province of Nova Scotia, even sponsoring Lodges and Masonry in neighbouring Provinces. For many years the Lodges thus created in the province were administered by Provincial Grand Lodges established by the Grand Lodges of England and Scotland under the direction of Provincial Grand Masters. In 1866 the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia was created and has held jurisdiction over the lodges in the province ever since.

For ease of contact, and for access to communications and travel, the Offices of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia has usually been found in Halifax, and for well over a century, on Barrington Street, close to the Lieutenant-Governor's Residence, the Old Burying Ground, St. Paul's Church, St. Matthew's Church, the home of the first Provincial Legislature in British North America, and St. Mary's Basilica.

Today, the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia consists of 104 Lodges scattered across the Province, in every County, City and Town, following our unofficial motto of "Making Good Men Better" serving and supporting our communities of our seniors and our youth both financially and by volunteering in activity centres and schools, providing scholarships across the Province to deserving young people, and teaching leadership and support wherever there is a need.

Who are we? We are the inheritors of a tradition of teaching morality and inspiration to our Fellow men. The



teachings of Masonry are organised into a series of stories which illustrate by example a variety of lessons and inspirations supportive of Faith, Hope, Charity, Brotherly Love, Truth, Honesty, Loyalty to God and to Country, and to each other. These stories are called "Degrees" and the Lodges of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia confer three of them, known by names taken from the old Guild and Corporations structures in the UK, the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason. They follow the Biblical history of the construction of Solomon's Temple to the Lord and the men who built it, using the everyday tools of the professional builder to illustrate lessons of morality and faith.

We are accused of being a "secret society", but we find it hard to understand why, because we spend so much time active in our communities. We're listed in phone books, and most modern computerised mapping programs can tell you where our Halls are located. Membership is open to men of good character and reputation, without regard to race, religion, ethnic origin or station in life. We are teachers, lawyers, doctors, judges, stevedores, truck drivers, steel workers, businessmen and public servants, clergymen and legislators, in short we are you, and your neighbours and friends.

And we continue to serve our fellow citizens and residents of Nova Scotia, as we have done since 1738.

Original URL: http://www.footstepsofthemasters.ca/brief_hist.html

Presented by: King Solomon Lodge #54 G.L.N.S - Digby, Nova Scotia, Canada