

Second Period  
"Provincial Grand Lodge of Antients"  
Under H.R.H. the Duke of Kent  
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The path of the Grand Lodge in London was by no means always smooth. Some lodges refused to join, others were expelled for failure to conform to Grand Lodge regulations; there was therefore a growing nucleus of malcontent Lodges. There were several sporadic attempts to form local opposition Grand Lodges, at different points in England; all doomed to failure. But in 1752 in London was formed a new Grand Lodge, under the title of "The Most Antient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons" (to become generally known as the "Grand Lodge of the Antients"). Progressing slowly at first, it soon began to accumulate momentum, and became powerful enough to cause the public mind to nickname the Senior Grand Lodge the "Moderns", (much to the distress of that Senior Body). And, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the rivalry between these two Grand Lodges, (the "Moderns" and the "Antients") was to become so bitterly intense as to split up the entire Craft into two distinct Bodies, much to the detriment of the order as a whole.

Dr. John Gawler, Grand Junior Warden of the first Provincial Grand Lodge at Quebec, ("Moderns") who was then in London, writes to his Provincial Grand Secretary in 1768 as follows:-

"I am sorry to inform you that in London there is a great division amongst the Craft: those under your Grand Master are the most universal, and though they call themselves Ancient Masons work the modern way; and those under G.M. Matthews work the ancient way and are called York Masons. The Duke of Beaufort has formally ordered his Lodges not to admit any of the ancient working masons into their Lodges, which has put a very great antipathy between them. However, there are many who constantly visit both, and Lodges in the country who derive their authority from the Duke of Beaufort and work after the ancient manner. But with regard to regularity and the speedy relief of the distressed, the Duke's Lodges excel."

In this latter half of the 18th century, however, the Senior Grand Lodge, "Moderns", were fortunate enough to enrol a number of members of the Royal family, including the Prince of Wales, (afterwards King George IV), H.R.H. the Duke of Kent and



H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex. The Prince of Wales soon was made "Grand Master". The Grand Master of the "Antients" was the Duke of Athol; and new nicknames of the grand bodies began to be commonly used, instead of the terms "Ancient and Modern", (much to the satisfaction of the Senior Grand Lodge). Their adherents were now often called "Prince of Wales Masons", and the Antients "Athol Masons". In the Masonic Year Book issued by United Grand Lodge of England, each lodge that was originally "Ancient" carries this reference, "was formerly on Athol or Antient Grand Lodge Roll".

The Prince of Wales remained Grand Master until he became Prince Regent, when his younger brother, the Duke of Sussex, was appointed in his stead. The Duke of Kent appears to have been the travelling member of the Royal family; and came over to Canada for a long visit in 1792.

In the meantime the Antient Grand Lodge had by no means neglected the growing field offered by the colonies in British North America. In 1792, they had Provincial Grand Lodges in New England, one in Nova Scotia; and in Canada, in the City of Quebec, three separate lodges, reporting directly to the Grand Lodge of Antients in London. (Prior to the Act of Confederation of the Provinces into the "Dominion of Canada" in 1867, the entire limits of "Canada" comprised only the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario). On this continent, these Antient Masons consistently called themselves "Antient York" Masons laying great stress on the legend or tradition of Constitutions granted by Prince Edwin at the city of York as early as 926 A.D.\*

The news of the coming of so prominent a "Modern" as H.R.H. Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, naturally gave rise to great expectations on the part of the Masons under the Provincial Grand Lodge, both in Quebec and Montreal. But, to the surprise of everybody, His Royal Highness, shortly after his arrival at the city of Quebec, quietly got into touch with the three "Antient" Lodges, had himself "healed" from modern to antient

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\* See Graham's "History of Freemasonry in the Province of Quebec", page 106.



masonry, and was elected and installed Provincial Grand Master of "Antients in Canada"! The consternation in the existing Provincial Grand Lodge of Moderns can easily be imagined!

There would seem to be little doubt but that this unexpected move was definitely planned for a well-considered purpose. In the old country, within the Senior Grand Lodge, the two Brothers, Kent and Sussex, had been wishing, hoping and dreaming of a future healing of the great division in the Craft. The "Royal and Right Worshipful Grand Master", (as the Duke of Kent was soon to be generally called in Canada), lost no time, and it is interesting to note his programme here; (just as it is interesting to remember that ~~every~~<sup>twenty</sup> one years later, at the final Ceremony of Amalgamation, the two Master's Chairs set side by side were filled, one by the Duke of Sussex as Grand Master of all the Moderns; the other by the Duke of Kent, as Grand Master of all the Antients'). H.R.H. Prince Edward was duly installed as Provincial Grand Master of Lower Canada under the Grand Lodge of Antients on the 22nd of June 1792; and as early as December 1792, at his command, committees were meeting the officers of the Modern lodges, "if possible to form a coalition of parties". On St. John's Day the same year, the new Antient Grand Lodge met at four o'clock to install the Grand officers elect; and at five o'clock, by the Royal and Right W<sup>or</sup>sh<sup>ip</sup>ful Grand Master's invitation, the present and past Grand Officers, (Antients), together with the Grand Officers under H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, (Moderns), met the Grand Master at dinner at Lane's Coffee House in Quebec.\*

The Duke of Kent was called to Martinique, B.W.I. in 1794. As a Mason, he was both competent and very popular, and had endeared himself to both Antients and Moderns. A farewell address dated 8th January 1794 was jointly signed by William Grant, as Deputy G.M. of Modern Masons; and by Thomas Ainslie, as Deputy G.M. of Antient Masons. It contained this

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\* Graham's "History of Free Masonry" - page 94



vital paragraph,

"We have a confidential hope that, under the conciliatory influence of your Royal Highness, the Fraternity in general of Freemasons in His Majesty's Dominion will soon be united."

The Duke of Kent's gracious reply contained these words in answer to this paragraph,

"You may trust that my utmost efforts shall be exerted, that the much wished for union of the whole Fraternity of Masons may be effected."\*

Sir Alfred Robbins, in his comprehensive volume on "English Speaking Freemasonry", published in London in 1930, says,

"The "Antient" Grand Lodge in 1792 appointed H.R.H. Prince Edward, (afterwards Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria, and grandfather of the Duke of Connaught, England's 1930 Grand Master), to be Provincial Grand Master for Canada. It was when leaving his position there that Kent, (later to assist his brother Sussex in consummating the English Masonic Union), was the earliest Freemason of prominence to recommend steps towards a happy ending for the then long-abiding divergence between "Moderns" and "Antients". Strikingly enough, it was from Canada, whence this urge to Masonic unity originally came."

But, on the same page, Robbins quotes Nova Scotia as the originating centre for the steady spread of Canadian Masonry in the 18th century. It is an easy error for a Londoner. But we know that Nova Scotia has its own separate Masonic History; and had no connection with Canada until the "Act of Confederation" included it in the "Dominion of Canada", in 1867. Halifax, and its first Mason's Lodge, began in 1749; ten years before Wolfe captured the city, and died at Quebec in 1759. Apparently, Robbins had never seen the first

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\* See "Freemason's Magazine", London, July 1794, pages 13 and 14.



"Minutes" of the first "Provincial Grand Lodge of Moderns" formed in Quebec by the Freemasons in Wolfe's army in 1759; and ignores this romantic origin of the Craft in Lower Canada; of which P.G.L. of Moderns the Masonic Year Book, on page 399, quotes ~~four~~ <sup>five</sup> successive P.G. Masters, namely:

Col. Simon Fraser,	1760,	
Milborne West,	1764,	
John Collins,	1767,	(who signed St. Paul's first warrant in 1770)
Col. Christopher Carleton	1786,	
Sir John Johnson	1788.	

However, there was one striking effect of the Establishment of the new P.G.L. of Antients that the Duke of Kent could hardly have foreseen. Comparatively little was known in Lower Canada of the bitter combat between "Moderns" and "Antients" in England. Also, living as a minority in a country but recently captured from France, and having totally rejected all the overtures of the rebellious United States in 1776, the English speaking population, both freemasons and laymen, were Royalists and Loyalists to a man. There began a slow but steady stampede of all the Modern Lodges over to the new P.G.L. of Antients; and the ceremony of "healing over" an entire Lodge from Modern to Antient Masonry was of common occurrence. St. Paul's Lodge stood out as the most prominent lodge in Montreal. Among her officers and members were many names prominently connected with the early development of the city; and the Lodge was on terms of intimacy with Sir John Johnson, the Provincial Grand Master, whose name is closely allied with the early history of Canada as a prominent "United Empire Loyalist". About the time of the Duke of Kent's stay in Quebec, we find the name of Thomas Busby as Master of St. Paul's: and that very energetic young Englishman, John Molson, who was Master twice, in 1791 and 1795; and who was to become Provincial Grand Master for "Montreal and William Henry" in 1826. In the early development of Montreal John Molson took a very important part; and he became world famous for constructing and operating the first steamboat on the St. Lawrence river; the <sup>s/s</sup> "Accomodation", running regularly between Montreal and Quebec. (There has been at



least one Molson of this family continuously in active membership in St. Paul's Lodge ever since this time). Although St. Paul's ultimately, <sup>like</sup> with all the other Lower Canada Lodges, eventually swung over to the P.G.L. of Antients, it did not actually make the move until the 1st of May 1797, therefore taking "No. 12 Provincial", which was a high number for this small P.G.L. But once in with the "Antients", St. Paul's went rapidly ahead with the new work. The Lodge issued its own Master Mason's certificates, of which rare documents three are displayed in the Lodge room, dating 1799, 1806 and 1808 respectively. The Lodge began to issue Mark degrees, Royal Arch degrees and also Masonic Knight Templar degrees! Brother Gwyn Owen Radford, Master of St. Paul's in 1803, was said to have been an authority on the mysteries and ceremonies of Six Knights Templar and Knights of Malta in Montreal.\*

On the 14th January 1800, a well known Quebec Mason, The Hon. Claude Denechau, member of Parliament for L'Islet, and Seigneur of Berthier-en-bas, a French Canadian and a Roman Catholic, was brought up to St. Paul's Lodge in Montreal, and solemnly "haled" from "Modern" to "Antient" Masonry. Claude Denechau was to become a very important Lower Canada Mason. In a very short time, he appears as a P.G. Warden of the P.G.L. of Antients. At the time of the grand Amalgamation he was acting as Deputy P.G. Master of Antients to the Duke of Kent. And he was unanimously elected in Lower Canada to carry on as P.G.M. of the new "United Grand Lodge" in 1814.

The Duke of Kent left Quebec in 1794, reached Martinique in March, came north to Halifax that fall, (where he "commanded" till the fall of 1798). He went home to England that winter, and came back to Halifax for a year, (summer of 1799 to late summer of 1800), as Commander in Chief of British North America. He never came back to Quebec, but never relinquished his title of "P.G.M. of Antients for Canada", till 1813: and the office was never filled. The P.G.L. carried on instead with different Deputy Grand Masters; and documents were signed

\* See Graham's "History of Freemasonry" - pages 120 and 121.



by the "Deputy Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge,  
under the Patronage of H.R.H. Prince Edward, Duke of Kent".

And, on St. John's Day in London, the 27th  
December 1813, the final Amalgamation Ceremonies were duly  
carried out; and both Moderns and Antients drank the toast  
of "Peace, Goodwill, and Brotherly Love all over the world".

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