

Education & Enlightenment

A Special Committee of

The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada



A History of the Rite in Canada

By

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Our Supreme Council traces its beginnings to Ill. Bro. Sir William James Bury McLeod Moore, 33°, who joined the Scottish Rite in the 'Cerneau' Council in New York in 1863 and was later named by that body as its 'Deputy for Canada'. However, in 1868 the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction (with which the Cerneau Council had since merged), Ill. Bro. Josiah Hayden Drummond, said in an address to his Supreme Council that he recognized that Canada, being a British Dominion, properly fell under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Council of 'England and Wales and...etc.' and he recommended that Illustrious Brother McLeod Moore apply to be affiliated with that body and then request a Charter from them to establish Scottish Rite bodies in the Dominion. This Illustrious Brother Moore did, and in that same year he received a Dispensation from the Supreme Council of England to open a Consistory and a Chapter of Rose Croix in Hamilton, Ontario. On July 10th 1868, while attending the Thirteenth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Canada in London, Ontario, Ill. Bro. McLeod Moore organised 'Moore Sovereign Consistory' and the 'Hamilton Chapter of Rose Croix', both to meet in Hamilton. The Chapter held its first meeting in Hamilton on

August 16th 1868 and the Consistory its first on December 8th 1868. Chapters of Rose Croix were shortly later formed in London, Ontario, in Orillia and in Toronto.

Interest in the Rite was also present in the Maritimes, where brethren in St. John, New Brunswick, applied for and received a warrant from the Supreme Council of England dated May 6th 1868 to establish a Chapter of Rose Croix in St. John. Several brethren from Halifax, Nova Scotia who had received their degrees in New Brunswick then petitioned for and received a warrant to establish 'Keith Chapter of Rose Croix' in Halifax. This Chapter held its first meeting on January 19th 1871.

Also in 1871 several brethren in New Brunswick who were members of the Royal Order of Scotland petitioned the Supreme Council of Scotland for a Charter. One was issued on August 9th 1871 establishing the 'New Brunswick Chapter R.C' and the 'New Brunswick Consistory K-H 30th Degree'.

Most of the brethren involved in the formation of these bodies had earlier received their degrees in one of the two American jurisdictions. In both of those jurisdictions all the degrees from the fourth to the thirty-second were conferred in full. This differed significantly from the practice in England, where for most brethren only the eighteenth and the thirtieth were conferred in full. The thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third were by invitation only and the rest of the degrees were only communicated. For this reason, and others, brethren in Canada felt it would be best if Canada had its own Supreme Council and petitioned the Supreme Council of England for their approval. After assuring itself that this was indeed the wishes of the members of both those bodies under its authority, as well as the two under the Supreme Council of Scotland, on July 15th 1874 the Supreme Council of England issued a Patent to Ill. Bro. Thomas Douglas Harrington 33^o, authorizing him to form a 'Grand and Supreme Council for

Canada' and appointing him its Sovereign Grand Commander for life. On October 16th 1874, in Ottawa, he established the Supreme Council of Canada, appointed its officers and members and opened its first meeting. At that time there were under its jurisdiction two Consistories, one in Hamilton and one in Saint John, NB; a 'Consistory K-H' in New Brunswick; Chapters of Rose Croix in Hamilton, London, Maitland, Toronto, Montreal, Saint John and Halifax; and one Lodge of Perfection in Hamilton. At that meeting a third Consistory was approved for Montreal. Ill. Bro. Albert Pike, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the Southern Masonic Jurisdiction of the Rite, was present and presented to the new Supreme Council a copy of the Rituals of the Southern Masonic Jurisdiction.

The new Supreme Council immediately had to deal with a challenge to its authority in Maitland, Ontario, which led to the cancellation of the warrants of the bodies there in 1877. One of the brethren involved, George Canning Longley, began warranting 'Scottish Rite' bodies on his own authority. These became a popular alternative to our Supreme Council for a while but these bodies died away after Langley's death in 1885.

In the first 25 years of its existence the Rite in Canada, despite some setbacks, established itself and continued to grow. In 1876 Deputies were appointed for Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. In 1889 some Master Masons in Winnipeg petitioned to join the Rite and arrangements were made to form a Consistory, Chapter and Lodge of Perfection there and to confer the degrees of the Rite. From there the Rite slowly spread in the West, with a Lodge and Chapter established in British Columbia in 1880.

Annual Sessions were held in Montreal from 1875 to 1889, with the exception of 1885 when, because of a smallpox epidemic there, it was cancelled. In 1882 Honorary Inspectors-General were first coroneted. Ill.

Bro. Harrington served as Sovereign Grand Commander until his death in 1882; thereafter the Sovereign Grand Commander, like the other Officers of Supreme Council, were elected to a three-year term. In 1881 the conferring of many or all of the Degrees at one time at 'Reunions' was introduced in Hamilton and soon spread to other areas, and continues today to be a common way for Degrees to be conferred. 1881 also saw the beginning of a Scottish Rite Library. In 1890 the headquarters of Supreme Council moved to Hamilton, where it remains to the present. In its first 25 years the Rite in Canada had grown from about 200 members in three Consistories, one Council K-H 30°, 8 Chapters of Rose Croix and one Lodge of Perfection to just over 1700 members in 5 Consistories, 12 Chapters of Rose Croix and 14 Lodges of Perfection.

The period from 1901 to 1923 saw the Rite spreading, particularly in the West, with the Chartering of new Consistories, Chapters and Lodges. Despite the disruptions cause by the Great War, the Rite continued to prosper and in 1923, at the then-considerable cost of \$400,000, the present Scottish Rite Cathedral was built in Hamilton. Special Jubilee celebrations were held in 1924 at the Supreme Council Session in Vancouver, at which time the Rite boasted 10,904 members in 8 Consistories, 21 Chapters and 26 Lodges of Perfection. This period marked an era of growth that lasted up to 1930, by which time enrollment had risen to 13,300. The difficulties of the Great Depression led to a decline in membership which, however, despite the demands of the Second World War, was followed by growth in membership in the early 1940's so that enrolment again reached about 13,000 members. Rapid growth in both membership and in the chartering of new bodies continued after the War so that in 1959 there were 25,297 members in 10 Consistories, 30 Chapters and 35 Lodges of Perfection.

In 1964 a significant step was taken by the Rite in the founding of the Scottish Rite Charitable Foundation. Supreme Council provided it with an initial investment of \$100,000 for its capital fund. All future donations

would join this investment and the interest on it would be used to give grants for research on 'diseases of the mind'. In 2015, over \$400,000 was granted to many different researchers. As well, 8 Learning Centres for helping children with dyslexia learn to read have been established in different cities across Canada.

Newfoundland and Labrador had joined Confederation in 1949 but it was not until 1967 that a Scottish Rite body was established there with the chartering of Centennial Lodge of Perfection in St. John's in that year. Nationally, enrollment continued to grow until by 1974 there were 30,868 members in 10 Consistories, 35 Chapters and 42 Lodges of Perfection.

In common with most other Masonic bodies, the ensuing years saw a decline in membership so that by 1999, although there were now 16 Consistories, 41 Chapters and 49 Lodges of Perfection, membership had fallen to 26,121. This membership decline accelerated in the next few years, with some bodies finding it necessary to give up their Charters, until by 2015, there were 14,736 members in 17 Consistories, 36 Chapters and 46 Lodges of Perfection.

In 2015 Supreme Council sponsored a drive to raise another \$1,000,000 for the Scottish Rite Charitable Fund's investments. This was a great success. To date, \$1,640,000 has been raised. The original \$100,000 investment fund has risen to over \$17,000,000. All the proceeds from the Rite's various charitable causes go towards helping to solve 'the puzzles of the mind'.