

Excerpts from
The History of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada
1857 – 1958

Authorized by the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada, Toronto
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CHAPTER 10
New Grand Chapter In Alberta

Most Excellent Companion McWatt, the Grand Z, had intimated in his last address a feeling of unrest in Capitular Masonic circles among a few in the Province of Alberta. After several abortive attempts a convention was called and the following telegram to the Grand Scribe Ezra, Right Excellent Companion George J. Bennett was the first intimation received by the Grand Chapter of Canada of the final attempt to form a Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Alberta.

“Calgary, Alta., May 29, 1914.

George J. Bennet, Grand Scribe E., Room 9, Temple Building, Toronto, Ontario.

Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Alberta formed to-day. S. Y. Taylor of Calgary, Grand First Principal, M. M. Downey of Calgary, Grand Scribe E.

M. M. Downey, 739, 19th Ave., N.W.”

A meeting of as many of the Executive Committee as possible was summoned to meet in Toronto on June 1, 1914. At this meeting a report from Rt. Ex. Comp. A. C. Kemmis K.C., Past Grand Supt. of Pender [*sic*] Creek gave details of the meeting held in Calgary, May 29, 1914, at which Rt. Ex. Comp. S. Y. Taylor was Elected to the Chair for the purpose of erecting a Grand Chapter in Alberta. A motion was then read and approved as follows: "That, while professing loyalty to the Grand Chapter of Canada, the Royal Arch Chapters in Alberta decided that the time had come for the formation of a Grand Chapter in Alberta and that the formation of such a Grand Chapter should now be proceeded with". After considerable discussion both for and against the above motion "reasons" were set forth by both sides which are of little interest to us at this date.

When several Companions of various ranks had expressed themselves on the motion an amendment was proposed "that the approval of the Grand Chapter of Canada should first be obtained". The amendment lost and the Motion was declared carried.

On May 30, P. G. Scribe [*sic*], A. C. Kemmis wrote to the Grand Chapter of Canada a report of the proceedings of the Calgary meeting of May 24, 1914, and requesting "that the recognition of the Grand Chapter of Canada be NOT given to any Grand Chapter in Alberta. His letter further pointed out that there were enough Chapters in Alberta opposed to the formation of a Grand Chapter to form a District under the Grand Chapter of Canada and he urged the support of the Grand Chapter of Canada in this respect.

"It is necessary that the Grand Chapter support us firmly, as we have worked very hard and gone to a great deal of trouble to maintain the authority of the Grand Chapter."

A letter was sent by the Alberta Companions to the Grand Chapters of the World setting forth their reasons for so acting in the formation of a Grand Chapter of Alberta. These "reasons" dealt largely with the statements that the subordinate Chapters (in Alberta) were unable to bear the expense of sending delegates to the Annual Convocations and that, as a consequence, "irregularities are common in almost every Chapter". This letter also pleaded as a

further reason the formation of Grand LODGES in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in the same year, 1905, that political autonomy was granted them. Quoting further from this letter: "The principle of co-incident or co-terminous of political and masonic boundaries is an acknowledged law of the constitutions of the Grand Masonic Bodies of England, Ireland and Scotland, and the jurisdiction of each of these Grand Bodies is exclusive within its geographical limits".

Quoting further: "Many precedents may be quoted to prove that the same principle has been recognized by the Craft in the formation of Supreme Masonic Bodies in the United States of America".

This letter was signed by S. Y. Taylor, Grand Z, Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Alberta.

Out of eighteen Grand Chapters which had held their annual convocations since May, not one had granted recognition to the Alberta Grand Chapter.

Right Excellent Companion D. C. Robertson, Grand Superintendent of Alberta N. District No. 17 in his report stated, "I deeply regret to report that during the past year dissension has arisen in our ranks. A number of chapters met at Calgary and formed a so-called Grand Chapter.

. . . The fact therefore is there is a serious split in our ranks which will need the most careful handling and will require to be met on both sides in this true brotherly spirit."

Grand Chapter approved the donation of three thousand dollars apportioned in equal division to the Patriotic Fund, the Red Cross Fund and the Belgian Relief.

The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada was opened in ample form in the Masonic Temple, City of London, on Wednesday, 24th of February, 1915, by Most Excellent Companion Daniel MacWatt, Grand Z, Right Excellent Companion W. S. R. Murch, Grand Haggai, and Right Excellent Companion A. S. Gorrell, Grand Joshua. The Grand Council on the throne. 118 chapters were represented. Right Excellent Companion D. C. Robertson, Grand Superintendent Alberta North and W. V. Sanders, Alberta south being present. It was reported that the amount spent on benevolence by Grand Chapter was \$1,880 and by constituent chapters \$8,280. Fifteen chapters of instruction had been held.

The committee on the Grand Z's address concluded its reference to the Alberta situation in these words: "It would be well for this Grand Body to place on record its adoption of the principle that if any province in this jurisdiction comes forward with a proper request, supported by all or a fair majority of its members, asking for secession, it will be favorably considered, but it is incumbent on this Grand body to satisfy itself that such request emanates from the majority, and not from a minority, to the exclusion of those who would in case of a general request for secession be the choice of a majority of the qualified Royal Arch electors in that province, and this Committee recommends that if the Companions in Alberta, having regard to the preceding clause, decide it to be in the interests of Royal Arch Masonry that a Grand Chapter be constituted in that province, the Most Excellent the Grand First Principal be authorized to further their request.

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The fifty-eighth convocation of the Grand Chapter of Canada was holden at Toronto on Wednesday, Feb. 23rd 1916. Most Excellent Companion W.S.R. Murch, Grand Z., Right Excellent Companion A. S. Gorrell, Grand Haggai, and Most Excellent Companion Fred W. Harcourt, acting Grand Joshua.

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The Grand First Principal was authorized to visit the loyal chapters in Alberta during the coming year.

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On June 17th, Most Excellent Companion Murch travelled to Western Canada holding meetings of the Chapters in Winnipeg and Brandon. Chapters of instruction were held in Hartney, Regina and Moose Jaw. Informal meetings were held in Calgary between members of the Grand Chapter of Alberta and members of the Grand Chapter of Canada. A joint committee from each Grand Chapter was appointed to meet in Edmonton. The Grand Z. moved westward attending meetings at Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, Alta. Nelson, B.C., Rossland, arriving in Vancouver on June 30th, where a chapter of instruction was held. A most successful convocation was held in Victoria where the officers and members of Columbia Chapter, Scottish Registry were present. The Grand Z. returned to Edmonton via Prince Rupert where the agreement entered into by Most Excellent Companion F. S. Watson on behalf of the Grand Chapter of Alberta and Most Excellent Companion Murch on behalf of the Grand Chapter of Canada was signed on July 17th, 1916. On the return journey meetings were held at Melville, Sask.

Grand Chapter was summoned to meet in emergent convocation in the city of Toronto on Tuesday the 12th day of September. 12 Chapters were represented and with 47 Past Principals, members of Grand Chapter made a total of 59 names registered. The Most Excellent the Grand Z. then presented a verbal report as to his visit in the Western Provinces and especially to the Chapters in the Province of Alberta, after which the Grand Scribe Ezra read the agreement of adjustment, which had been entered into between the Grand First Principal of the Grand Chapter of Canada and the Grand First Principal of the Grand Chapter of Alberta.

After a full discussion it was moved by Most Excellent Companion A. Shaw, seconded by Most Excellent Companion George Moore: "That having read the report presented by the Grand First Principal of the Grand Chapter of Canada respecting the attitude of the Grand Chapter of Alberta, showing: 1. That the Companions of Alberta were misled as to the opinions of the Grand Chapter of Canada in connection with unexpressed desires of the Province of Alberta to form a Grand Chapter in that Province. 2. That the Companions of Alberta never requested separation from the Grand Chapter of Canada. 3. That the majority of Chapters in said Province of Alberta were desirous of retaining their allegiance to the Grand Chapter of Canada. 4. That having learned the facts in connection with their separation and formation of a Grand Chapter in the Province of Alberta, and having expressed their regrets, as a Grand Chapter, for their action. Therefore, be it resolved that this, the Grand Chapter of Canada, accept the agreement of adjustment presented by Committees appointed by the Grand First Principals of the Grand Chapter of Canada, and the Grand Chapter of Alberta, and hereby declare that the difficulty existing between the Grand Chapter of Canada and the Grand Chapter of Alberta be now harmoniously adjusted, and the Grand Chapter of Alberta be recognized and received as a Grand Chapter by the Grand Chapter of Canada." The following amendment to the motion was moved by Most Excellent Companion J. Ross Robertson, seconded by Right Excellent Companion A. T. Freed, that: "The Grand Chapter of Alberta be forthwith recognized, as an independent Grand Body, on having expressed its regret, because it had not made a request for its formation and that the Grand First Principal be requested to establish fraternal relationship with the the Grand Chapter of Alberta." Upon the amendment and motion

being put to a vote the motion was declared carried. It was then moved by Right Excellent Companion W. N. Ponton, seconded by Most Excellent Companion D. F. Macwatt, that "The Companions of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada, do express and record upon the Minutes of this Emergent Convocation, their deep sense of appreciation of the assiduous and devoted labors of the Most Excellent, the Grand First Principal, W. S. R. Murch, in connection with the Alberta difficulties, now happily ended, and they desire to pay a warm tribute to his unselfish sacrifice of time and energy, and to his untiring efforts in the cause of Capitular Masonry in conciliating the differences causing misunderstandings, and bringing about harmony and concord.

CHAPTER 11
New Grand Chapters...

The fifty-ninth annual convocation was held in the city of Toronto on Feb. 28th, 1917. Most Excellent Companion W. S. R. Murch presiding. He reported that, Alberta Chapter, Calgary; North Star, Edmonton; Assiniboia, Medicine Hat; Golden West, High River; Bekah, McLeod; Otuskwan, Calgary; Keystone, Red Deer; Capital City, Edmonton; Vermilion, Vermilion; Hillvue, Hillcrest; Mount Olivet, Killan; Norwood, Edmonton; had joined the Grand Chapter of Alberta but that Sekinah No. 158, Lethbridge; Kether No. 177, Pincher Creek and Tau Cross No. 201, Claresholm remained with the Grand Chapter of Canada. Several of the chapters requested that the Grand Chapter of Canada return the original warrants so that they could re-issue them as a reminder of the good feeling which existed between them and the Grand Chapter of Canada. The Grand Z. recommended that this request be granted after the warrant had been marked cancelled.

The Grand Z. also recommended that the companions who had been suspended be restored and that the right hand of Companionship be extended and that they be recommended to all the Royal Craft for fraternal greetings.

Most Excellent Companion Arthur S. Gorrell of Regina Saskatchewan, presided over the sixtieth annual convocation of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada in the Masonic Temple, Toronto, on Wednesday, February 27th, 1918.

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"It was moved by Most Excellent Companion D. F. Macwatt, seconded by Right Excellent Companion W. N. Ponton, whereas in the near future it is likely applications will be made to the Grand Chapter of Canada for the formation of Grand Chapters, it is advisable to set out clearly what the Grand Chapter of Canada considers necessary. Therefore be it resolved:—That the Grand Chapter of Canada record its readiness to recognize and approve the establishment of a Grand Chapter in any Province, now within the jurisdiction of the Grand Chapter of Canada, as soon as a proper memorial is received from the majority of the Companions and Chapters of that Province in good standing expressing their well-considered desire to that effect."

"That in accordance with the above, permission be given to the Chapters of this jurisdiction, in any Province, to meet for the purpose of considering what action, if any, they may deem advisable to take towards securing the formation of a Grand Chapter for any such Province, and the Most Excellent the Grand Z. and the Executive Committee are hereby authorized to take such steps, in the matter, as they may consider for the best interest of Royal Arch Masonry."