

## Hidden Rivalries between Ancient and Modern Freemasons

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between the Ancients and Moderns in Freemasonry. When I began to research this subject more than twenty years ago, I discovered a bewildering array of writings, articles and books. Those of you have also explored the subject of Ancients and Moderns might agree with me that it is not a simple exercise. Contradictory statements abound—pronouncements by Masonic scholars are not always accurate—and terminology is often confusing. Confronted with these interesting variables, I became ever more determined to understand the subject myself and, if possible, share my gleanings with my Brethren. I am, therefore, grateful to you, Worshipful Master and the Brethren of Victoria Lodge of Education and Research for giving me the opportunity of presenting some of my research tonight.

Examining the complex relationship between Ancient and Modern Freemasonry, I will focus on the period between 1717 and 1816, a span of one hundred years and a key period in the development of the Grand Lodge system we know today. I will also allude to earlier and later aspects, only briefly, in order to clarify my presentation, as well as refer to the Canadian context.

Let us begin with the terminology. The Grand Lodge of England (later known as the Moderns) was formed in 1717 when, on St. John the Baptist's Day, June 24, four Lodges in London came together under the first known Grand Master of Masons, Bro. Anthony Sayer. The four respective Lodges were known by the names of the taverns in which they met: the Goose and Gridiron, the Crown, the Apple Tree and the Rummer and Grapes. It is important to stress that these were "time immemorial" Lodges existing and working autonomously and in their own right. In becoming the four charter constituent Lodges they, of course, surrendered their autonomy. I will return to this notion of autonomy, because it is an essential concept in the emergence of our Craft and the Grand Lodge system worldwide. Autonomy has also been the cause of tension and, yes, even rivalry, within the Masonic Order. Reviewing the events surrounding the formation of the first Grand Lodge, for instance, one reads this statement by renowned Masonic scholars Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight: "1717 is the most important date in the history of Freemasonry."

[Pick & Knight, 68]. Written in the 1950s, this statement reveals a significant bias, and implies the superior authority of the Grand Lodge of 1717. And what, may one imagine, did the Brethren, meeting in other time immemorial Lodges in 1717, in England, Ireland and Scotland, think of this apparently momentous occasion? The rivalry continues.

During the years following its founding, the Grand Lodge of England grew enormously, attracting other Lodges but, equally important, warranting many new ones. In 1723, the famous first Constitutions appeared. Interestingly, two fundamental expressions in it were adopted from the Scottish Freemasons. Whereas the English Freemasons heretofore referred to “Apprentice” and “Fellow”, they changed to the Scots “Entered Apprentice” and “Fellow-Craft.” [Pick & Knight, 76] Observing this adoption, some of the Scottish Brethren must have brought to mind that old saying, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.” Within ten years, the Grand Lodge had created Provincial Grand Lodges and appointed Provincial Grand Masters. One such is worth mentioning here; on June 5, 1730, Daniel Coxe was appointed Provincial Grand Master of the American Colonies of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. [Coil. 136]

It is important to consider, during this period, that the ceremonies of the three degrees were being developed and refined. According to the eminent Masonic scholar Harry Carr, the narrative of the Master Mason’s Degree, used by English Lodges, came about in 1724-25. [Carr, 58] At that time, constituent Lodges of the Grand Lodge of England practised two degrees: the Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft comprised one ceremony; the Master Mason’s Degree the other. All of this progress was noteworthy but, in 1750, Samuel Pritchard published *Masonry Dissected*, an expose of the Craft. As a result, the Grand Lodge acted, and arbitrarily decreed that henceforth the word for the Entered Apprentice degree should be the one formerly used for the Fellow Craft Degree and, vice-versa. [McLeod, TGD 92-93] The reaction was equally swift, and a group of Irish Freemasons meeting in London said that the Grand Lodge was making innovation in the body of Freemasonry. Consequently, in 1751, they formed their own independent Grand Lodge. To emphasize that they respected the Ancient Landmarks, they styled their new body the Antient Grand Lodge of England and, with some cheek, referred to the Brethren affiliated with the older Grand lodge of England as “Moderns”. Hence, the rivalry became open and less subtle.

The six Lodges comprising the Ancient Grand Lodge were of Irish and Scottish origin. Freemasonry had been practised in Ireland for hundreds of years. Carr acknowledges that the dramatic presentation of the Master Mason’s Degree (as opposed to the narrative of the Moderns) was undoubtedly Irish in origin. [Carr, 148] It is documented that a distinct Master Mason’s Degree was worked in Scotland in 1696 and in Ireland in 1711. [Carr, 55] Some of the key Ancient traditions and practices included: (1) retaining the Christian aspect, including the festivals of St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist (the Holy Saints John), (2) the practice of installing a Worshipful Master with a special degree-type of ceremony, and (3) the practice of the catechism, or examination *in extenso* of candidates in the three degrees. Other significant

differences included the placement of the altar, the Greater and Lesser Lights at the centre of the Lodge, the use of Deacons and of course the due guard. The Moderns placed the Volume of the Sacred Law on the Worshipful Master's pedestal, and employed only Stewards, not Deacons, as junior officers.

The early growth of the Ancient Grand Lodge was significant. In addition to warranting Lodges in Great Britain, it began to do so in the American Colonies in 1756. It created a Provincial Grand Lodge in the Colonies in 1764. Over the years, Masonic scholars have examined the sociological differences between Ancient and Modern Lodges. There is no doubt that the British aristocracy became involved in the original or Modern Grand Lodge at an early time. [Pick & Knight, 70-75] Also, the Ancients seemed to attract merchants and craftsmen. Still, in 1756, the Earl of Blesington was installed as Grand Master of the Ancients [Pick & Knight, 92] Interestingly, in 1769, the Ancients installed a Roman Catholic, Thomas Mathew, as Grand Master, even though two Papal Bulls (1738 and 1751) had been proclaimed against Freemasonry. [Pick & Knight, 93]

Throughout the late 1700s, the Ancients and Moderns grew in a parallel fashion, their rivalry sometimes hidden, sometimes not. For instance, the Duke of Atholl, Grand Master from 1771 to 1774 expressed satisfaction that "the Ancient Craft is regaining its ground from the Moderns." [Pick & Knight, 93] The hidden rivalry, especially behind closed doors, was nonetheless palpable. For example, neither Grand Lodge, nor their constituent Lodges, would allow reciprocal visitation. There are also documented cases where a Brother attempted to affiliate with a Lodge from the opposite obedience, and was successful only because he agreed to take his three degrees over again. [Pick & Knight, 94] Rivalry continued, officially and unofficially, until 1809 when the Moderns' Grand Lodge created fraternal alliances with the Grand Lodge of Scotland and the Grand Lodge of Ireland. [Pick & Knight, 105] These important acts of respect and mutual recognition perhaps created the turning point for reconciliation between Ancients and Moderns in England.

Discussions and gestures of fraternal goodwill continued for several years when, by coincidence, in 1813 the Duke of Sussex became the Grand Master of the Modern Grand Lodge, and his blood brother the Duke of Kent became the Grand Master of the Ancients the same year. Thus, as fraternal Brothers, the two Grand Masters entered into Articles of Union, leading to the creation of the Lodge of Reconciliation, a combined Lodge, working from 1813 to 1816 and, finally, the creation of the United Grand Lodge of England.

During the latter half of the Eighteenth Century, Masonic rivalry was evident in British North America. The American Revolution was a crucible, not only for the creation of the new republic of the United States of America, but also for the changing face of Freemasonry in North America and beyond. We have already seen that the Ancients and Moderns were at work in the Colonies through their respective Provincial Grand Lodges. Other Grand Jurisdictions, however, were also active there. In 1760, the Grand Lodge of Scotland issued a charter for St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston. Rivalry once again appeared, and the Provincial Grand Lodge of North America

(Moderns) would not recognize the new Lodge. As a result, the clever Brethren of St. Andrews' Lodge applied for, and received from Scotland in 1769, a Warrant for a Provincial Grand Lodge. Dr. Joseph Warren became provincial Grand Master, with the authority to charter constituent Lodges within one hundred miles of Boston. As if to trump the Moderns, in 1773 the upstart Provincial Grand Lodge of Scotland had its Jurisdiction extended to the whole continent of North America! [Coil, 140-41] Yet another Jurisdiction, the Grand Lodge of Ireland, had along with the Grand Lodge of Scotland, issued travelling warrants to military Lodges embedded in British Imperial regiments that were posted to British North America. These military Lodges overwhelmingly used Ancient Ritual, and also initiated into the Craft civilian men wherever they were posted.

During the American Revolution, Lodges included in their membership Brethren of different loyalties. This subject is examined in detail by Steven C. Bullock in his excellent book, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*. Overall, the older and therefore Modern Lodges in the Colonies had Brethren of Tory or Loyalist persuasion, including a number of British aristocrats. The Ancient Lodges, for the most part, had the majority of merchants, farmers and craftsmen who tended to favour the Revolution. [Bullock, 85-108] We must also remember that the Moderns' ritual included the Antient Charges that Masons shall be loyal to the king and civil government. As stated in the Modern Charge in the Entered Apprentice Degree, "Monarchs themselves have not thought it derogatory from their dignity to exchange the sceptre for the trowel [or gavel, depending on the version]. Whereas the Ancient Ritual has no reference to monarchs, stating, "The greatest and best of men in all ages have been encouragers and promoters of the art, and have not deemed it derogatory to their dignity to level themselves with the Fraternity."

According to Coil,

The American Revolution had a marked and lasting effect on Freemasonry in the Colonies and in the new States. One result was the advancement of Ancient Masonry as compared with Modern Masonry. . . . The outstanding effect . . . was the erection, beginning and even during the hostilities, of independent Grand Lodges in all of the Colonies or States, which at the end of another century had increased to forty-nine, extending across the Continent to the Pacific Coast and constituting about half of the Grand Lodges of the world. [Coil, 142-143]

Hence, the Ancients came to dominate the Craft in North America, whereas they became transparent within the United Grand Lodge of England after their amalgamation with the Moderns.

What about Canada? During the American Revolution, Loyalists migrated north and populated the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Upper and Lower Canada. During the Seven Years' War, Brethren in British Regiments carried travelling warrants and established Lodges in several colonies. Although the Moderns created the Provincial Grand Lodge

of Nova Scotia in 1738, by 1757 the Ancients were dominant and their ritual was adopted. In turn, the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia spawned Grand Lodges in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island which, to this day, use Ancient Ritual exclusively. Both Ancients and Moderns were at work in Upper and Lower Canada. By 1855, the Grand Lodge of Canada, consisting of what is now Ontario and Quebec, was created. At that time, the Grand Lodge of Canada largely favoured the Emulation Ritual, based on the Moderns' work as practised by the United Grand Lodge of England. In 1859, the Grand Lodge of Canada officially adopted the "English work with some modifications." [McLeod, WCW 195-201] There were, however, two Lodges in London, Ontario (St. John's No. 20 and St. John's No. 209a) that were warranted by the Grand Lodge of Ireland and therefore used Ancient Ritual. These two Lodges did not join the Grand Lodge of Canada until they were given permission to continue using their work. [McLeod, WCW 197-198]

To summarize the ritual workings of the ten Grand Jurisdictions in Canada today: Ancient is used in ten, Canadian in five, Emulation in four, and Australian in one. In our own Grand Jurisdiction, we are enriched by the practice of four rituals—Ancient, Canadian, Emulation and Australian—as the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon employs the Scottish Rule, allowing constituent Lodges to choose their ritual work.

In conclusion, I hope that this brief review of the relationship between Ancients and Moderns has provided some further light on the history of whence we came and perhaps where we are travelling. Although I have described and alluded to rivalry, I believe that our beloved Craft and the Brethren who have led it over the centuries have, in remarkable ways, consistently chosen harmony over rivalry. It's the Masonic way.

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