



Ontario Masons

The Honorable William Gibson

Grand Master (1896-97 and 1897-98) of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario

Grand First Principal (1901-02 and 1902-03) of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario

Supreme Grand Master (1903-04 and 1904-05) of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada
Member of Parliament and Senator. Speculative and Operative Freemason.



Photo by Edward F. Dunsmore. (Note: "The portrait of MW Bro. Gibson is located in the Ivy Lodge No. 115 building in Beamsville. Originally, the portrait called 888 Yonge Street, Toronto, home. When that building was sold in the early 80's, Ivy Lodge was asked if they cared to be the custodian of it.")

(1849-1914)

By V.W. Bro. Marshall Kern, with contributions by R.W. Bro. Edward F. Dunsmore, and R.W. Bro. Michael Jenkyns.

In 1897, Her Majesty Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. Our Grand Lodge jurisdiction had several Lodges named "Victoria Lodge" in her honour. M.W. Bro. William Gibson was not only the Grand Master during this celebratory year, he was also a Member of Parliament. He took time during his Address to assure "Her Most Gracious Majesty of the high esteem, respect and love the members of the Grand Lodge of Canada entertain for her person and her throne."

In his address to Grand Lodge in 1897, M.W. Bro. Gibson recommended that Grand Lodge confer the rank of Past Grand Master upon R.W. Bro. Kivas Tully, who had made an outstanding contribution to Masonry in Toronto District, and to whom, perhaps more than to any other person, was due the establishment of the Grand Lodge of Canada. The recommendation was heartily approved.

Also in his address of 1897, M.W. Bro. Gibson noted that 56% of expenditures were for benevolence, yet our Grand Lodge was able to post a surplus for the year.

M.W. Bro. Gibson visited many Lodges, including a visit to Northern Light Lodge No. 93, Kincardine on December 1, 1897. While it is unclear as to the reason for visiting, it must have been a cause for grand celebration as the final toast at the banquet was delivered at 4am!

As with so many other Grand Masters, M.W. Bro. Gibson depended on the skill and assiduity of the Grand Lodge Officers around him. He acknowledged this in his 1898 Address when he said:

"I lay no special claim to the continued prosperity of Grand Lodge, as Grand Master. I accord most heartily the meed of praise to the loyalty of the members of the craft, to the honest and arduous work of our District Deputy Grand Masters, and last, although by no means least, to the industry, tact and ability of the Executive Officers, the Grand Secretary and the Grand Treasurer, brethren of long experience, who have assisted in making a great name for our Grand Lodge amongst the Grand Lodges of the world. They are brethren who have our respect, love and esteem, and I feel confident every brother in Grand Lodge joins me in the hope they may both be long spared to be of service to the craft."

The Gibson family had been an important fixture in the County of Lincoln since the mid 1800's as a result of their stone quarry business. The most prominent member of the family was William Gibson, who served as a member of Parliament and later was appointed to the Senate. Senator Gibson School in Beamsville is named after him.

William Gibson was born at Peterhead, Scotland on August 7, 1849, the son of William Gibson and Lucretia Gilzeau. He was educated in civil engineering at Peterhead Academy.

William Gibson joined his uncle in Ontario at age 16. When he was 35, he took over the Gibson Quarry in Beamsville upon the death of his uncle. He entered service with

the Great Western Railway, subsequently becoming one of the best known railway contractors in Canada, building many important works, including working on the St. Clair Tunnel, Welland Canal and Victoria Bridge in Montreal.

He was President for some years of the Bank of Hamilton, and brought the first chartered bank to Beamsville. He was either president or director of dozens of corporations and organizations including: a Director of the Canadian Screw Company; Canada Steel Company; Hamilton Provident and Loan Society; Mercantile Trust Company; and was President of the Hamilton Gas Light Company; Keewatin Lumber and Manufacturing Company; Keewatin Power; Bank of Hamilton and the Hamilton Jockey Club.

He built a large house named "Inverugie" on King Street in Beamsville, and there he entertained members of the peerage and well-known politicians, including Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier.

He gave generously to Knox Presbyterian Church.

As the largest employer in the area, the Gibson Quarry and its owner had a huge economic impact on Beamsville. For example, to ensure the supply of water for fire protection in the town, William Gibson gave a lot of his own money to bring running water to Beamsville.

He had an active political life and was a Councillor in Beamsville. From there he was elected to represent the County of Lincoln, Ontario in the House of Commons from 1891 to 1900, and was elected as Chief Liberal Whip for 1900-02. He was appointed to the Senate on February 11, 1902, and for several years was Chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking. He accompanied Sir Wilfred Laurier on his western tour of Canada in 1910 and was one of the Senate representatives at the 1911 wedding of King George V and Queen Mary.

He married Jane (daughter of John F. Davidson of Hamilton) on December 1, 1876. Unfortunately, she died in February 1902. He remarried on August 2, 1904, to Margaret E. (daughter of Alex Mackie of Peterhead, Scotland).

M.W. Bro. William Gibson passed to the Grand Lodge Above at Inverugie on May 4, 1914, in his 65th year. He is interred at Hamilton Cemetery and his grave monument does not have a Masonic designation. In 1951, his former home was purchased by Great Lakes Christian College, which still owns it today.

Masonic Career

Mr. William Gibson was initiated in The Barton Lodge, No. 6 GRC, Hamilton in 1871 and was Worshipful Master in 1876. He affiliated with Ivy Lodge, No. 115 GRC, Beamsville in 1879 and was elected as W.M. for 1881. He was elected as DDGM of Niagara District (1883-84). He held a number of Offices in the Grand Lodge of Canada and was elected the 17th Grand Master of the Grand Lodge A. F. & A. M. of Canada in the Province of

Ontario for the two-year term of 1896-97 and 1897-98. He was Grand Representative for the Grand Lodge A. F. & A. M. of Quebec.

On February 1, 1897, M. W. Bro. Gibson purchased a burial plot in Mount Osborne cemetery and deeded this to Ivy Lodge. This plot was still in existence, and has not been used.

In Capitular Masonry he was Exalted into St. John's Chapter, No. 6 GRC, Hamilton and was First Principal in 1878. He held a number of Offices in the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario and was elected Grand First Principal in 1901-02 and 1902-03.

In Knights Templary he was Knighted in Geoffrey de Bouillon Preceptory, No. 3, Hamilton and was Presiding Preceptor (1878-79). He was elected as Provincial Grand Prior of the Toronto District (1885-86); elected to the Grand Council (1892-93 and 1900-01); appointed to the Grand Council (1897-98, 1898-99 and 1899-1900); and elected as Deputy Grand Master (1901-02 and 1902-03). He was elected as Supreme Grand Master for the 1903-04 and 1904-05 terms.

He was a member of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite from 1882 and was constituted as an Honorary 33° in 1897 and crowned an active member of the Supreme Council in 1898. He served as Lieutenant Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Canada. He was a member of the Royal Order of Scotland.

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Town of Lincoln Historical Society Archives