

Otto Klotz

Honorary Grand Master (1885) of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada
in the Province of Ontario



(1817-1892)

Otto Klotz was born on November 25, 1817, at Keel, in the Duchy of Holstein, Denmark, during the recession following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. (In 1840 this part of Denmark would become part of the German Confederation.) His father, Jacob Klotz, was the junior member of the mercantile firm of Klotz and Son which was active in the grain trade. After completing his primary school in Keel, Otto was apprenticed to a wine merchant in Lübeck where he became fluent in English and French as well as German. In the spring of 1837 his uncle, Christian, sent a cargo of wheat to America and Otto accompanied it. The American grain market had collapsed and the venture failed. Otto was unable to find employment in New York and he was encouraged to come to Canada. Frontier life in McKillop Township of the Huron Tract was unappealing and he removed to the thriving German community at Preston where he entered into partnership with Dr. Charles Ebert, in a drug and grocery store, combined with a thriving brewery business.

In 1839 he married Elizabeth Wilhelm, daughter of a German farmer in Wilmot Township and they had seven children.

Encouraged and supported by William Scollick, a local surveyor, Otto took instruction in surveying and conveyancing (shipping of goods). On Scollick's death, Otto became his successor and prospered. In 1838 he purchased a brewery and in 1839 built a public house for visitors and guests. The Klotz Hotel in Preston was enlarged over time and was sold in 1881, to become the later twentieth century's Central Hotel. He had been naturalized in 1844 and became a Notary Public in 1846, Commissioner of affidavits and Clerk of the Division Court in 1848 and Justice of the Peace in 1851.

He was active in the community: first Secretary of the Hook and Ladder Company of Preston (1854) and of the Preston Fire Brigade (1850). He was the first Clerk of Council of the village of Preston when it was incorporated (1852). He was Secretary and later President of the Conservative party in the electoral subdivision and President of the German Societies. He was a director and President of the Waterloo County Agricultural Society, first President of the Preston Horticultural Society (1878), Chairman of the Building Committee of St. Peter's Lutheran Church (1886-87), Master of Ceremonies at the church cornerstone laying in 1887. It was in the field of education that he made his most important contributions: Secretary-Treasurer of the Preston School Board from 1839 to 1881 (except 1859-61), a Township School Commissioner (1841), visionary and creator of the first free-school in Canada West (when he convinced the taxpayers that the school should be open to all, with which they agreed) and Superintendent of Schools (1853-70). He was instrumental in the development, printing and use of a standard grammar for schools in Canada and for the adoption of a German Grammar which he had prepared and printed.

M.W.Bro. Otto Klotz died on July 6, 1892, at Preston.

Masonic Career

Mr. Otto Klotz was initiated into Barton No. 11 PRCW (now 6 GRC), Hamilton, on June 10, 1846. He affiliated with Alma No. 39 PRCW (now 72 GRC) in 1858 and served as WM (1863 and 1864). He affiliated with The Grand River 151 GRC (1866) and was a charter member and first WM of Preston 297, Preston (1873). He was made an honorary member of Galt 257, Galt. At Grand Lodge he served as Chairman of the Committee on Benevolence (1863-92) and during his term he assembled the first index of those who had received grants. He was named to the Committee on Ritual in 1867 and 1884. In 1874 he compiled the

appropriate ceremony for consecrating, dedicating and constituting a Lodge and for installing and investing Lodge officers, all of which were published in 1876. He also composed the General Charge used in the installation ceremony. In 1869 he was elected as the first DDGM of the newly formed Wellington District. He drew up the handbook of the Resolutions of Grand Lodge (1875) and the Rulings of Grand Masters—both of which are used to supplement the Constitution.

At the 30th Annual Communication (July 8, 1885, Hamilton), it was moved by R.W.Bro. John Elly Harding and seconded by M.W.Bro. Daniel Spry, and “*Resolved*—That the rank of Honorary Past Grand Master of this Grand Lodge, be conferred upon R.W.Bro. Otto Klotz, in recognition of the long and distinguished service rendered by him to this Grand Lodge.” It was then moved by R.W.Bro. E. Plant, seconded by R.W.Bro. F. C. Martin, and “*Resolved*—That a committee be appointed by the M.W. the Grand Master to select and present to M.W.Bro. Otto Klotz, Honorary Past Grand Master, the regalia pertaining to his position” (1885 *Proceedings*, p 131).

[Sources: (1) *Annual Proceedings* of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada and the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario. (2) *Whence Come We?*, Edited by the Special Committee on the History (Wallace McLeod, Chairman) and published by Masonic Holdings, 1980, Hamilton. (3) *R. W. Bro. Otto Klotz: The Times of His Life*, by R. W. Bro. Colin Heap, September 17, 1997, as published in the *Proceedings*, Vol. 20, 1997, of The Heritage Lodge, No. 730 GRC.]