

## Richard Beecher Hungerford

Grand Master (1900 – 1901) of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario

Grand First Principal (1888 – 1890) of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada



*Photo from the Grand Lodge*

(1846 – 1901)

*Prepared by V.W. Bro. Marshall Kern.*

Richard Beecher Hungerford was born in Clonakilty, County Cork, Ireland, in 1846. He came to Canada with his parents in 1862, and the family settled on a farm near Lobo, in the County of Middlesex, Ontario. Richard started working on the farm with his father and brothers. After a few years he moved to the City of London, where he resided until the time of his death.

In London he became engaged in the manufacture and sale of organs and other musical instruments. He eventually retired from mercantile life and became General Manager of the London Masonic Mutual Insurance Association. Some years later he became a member of the staff of the North American Life Assurance Company, and for many years was the Manager for Western Ontario.

His Scottish Rite obituary notes that he “was a man of great energy, of pleasing address, frank and courteous, yet of strong individuality. He was one of the most extensively known men in the West, his office of Manager and Inspector of an Insurance Company requiring his presence in every portion of Western Ontario.”

In religion he was an Anglican, being a member of St. James Church in London where for eighteen years he had served as Churchwarden.

Richard Becher Hungerford married Mary Large (1844 – 1904), and they had 3 children. Richard Frederick was born in 1871, Edward was born in 1877, and Lucy Maria was born in 1879.

M.W. Bro. Hungerford suffered a stroke on August 8, 1901. A month later his condition was reported in the press: “There is no marked change in the condition of M. W. Bro. R. B. Hungerford, GM of the Ontario Masonic Grand Lodge who is suffering from paralysis of his right side. His case is a serious one.” He lingered without improvement until dying on September 9, 1901.

The funeral was held at St. James Church. A description of the day observed that “a very large concourse of citizens of London from every walk of life, who not only filled the church where the religious services were held, but thronged the streets in the vicinity.” Many Masons from across the jurisdiction arrived by train to attend the funeral. A Masonic service was held at the grave in Woodlawn Cemetery, London. His gravestone notes his position as Grand Master.

A large portrait of M.W. Bro. Hungerford is displayed at the London Masonic Centre. It was painted by famed artist Sir E. Wyly Greir.

### **Masonic Career**

In Symbolic Masonry, he was Initiated in St. John's Lodge No. 81, Mount Brydges, on January 23, 1872. After he moved from Lobo to London, he affiliated with Kilwinning Lodge No. 64 and served as Worshipful Master for 1878 – 1879. He was also an affiliated member of The Tuscan Lodge No. 195, and of Union Lodge No. 380, both in London. He was the Secretary of Tuscan Lodge No. 195 from 1881 through 1898.



## Ontario Masons

He was elected and served as District Deputy Grand Master of the London District for 1879 - 1880. There were 37 lodges in London District. Unfortunately, there was a severe illness in M.W. Bro. Hungerford's family, and the meeting date of the Grand Lodge was moved from September to July, so that he was not able to visit every lodge in his District.

As DDGM of London District No. 2 he conducted the ceremonies to constitute, dedicate, and consecrate as new Masonic lodges King Solomon's Lodge No. 378, in Petersville, Union Lodge No. 880, in London, and the Middlesex Lodge No. 379, in Bryanston. He also consecrated the new lodge room of St. John's No. 81, Mount Brydges, his Mother Lodge.

A schismatic "Grand Lodge of Ontario" started in 1876 after a petition to form "Eden Lodge" in London was denied. Forty-eight brethren who were active with the "Grand Lodge of Ontario" were expelled. The "Grand Lodge of Ontario" was not successful with efforts to achieve proper status, and the expelled men started seeking admission through recognized Masonic lodges. As DDGM, M.W. Bro. Hungerford reported that he had devoted "a great deal of my attention and supervision" to two lodges willing to welcome members of the former "Grand Lodge of Ontario". He "administered the healing obligation to a large number of members" and was confident they would make good and loyal members of the Grand Lodge of Canada.

In 1898 he was elected Deputy Grand Master, to which office he was re-elected in the following year. In 1900 and again in 1901 he was elected Grand Master.

He was the Grand Representative of the Grand Lodge of Michigan, and President of the Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada at the time of his death.

In Capitular Masonry, he was exalted in St. George's Chapter No. 5 GRC, London and served as First Principal. He was elected and served as Grand First Principal of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada for the 1888 - 1889 and 1889 - 1890 terms. He was appointed as Grand Representative of the Grand Chapter of Georgia. In Knights Templary, he was a member of Richard Coeur de Lion Preceptory No. 4 KT, London.

As a member of Scottish Rite, M.W. Bro. Hungerford was a member of the London Lodge of Perfection, London Chapter of Rose Croix and Moore Consistory, Hamilton. He filled the office of Most Wise Sovereign in 1898, and was serving as TPGM at the time of his death. He was coroneted as an Honorary Inspector-General 33° at the annual session of the Supreme Council in 1898.

## **As Grand Master**

After appropriate words of welcome to the Grand Lodge Communication, our 19<sup>th</sup> Grand Master gave tribute to the late Queen Victoria. She died January 22, 1901. Grand Master Hungerford stated: "Queen Victoria had so intimate a place in the hearts of her people, and seemed so much a part of their daily life, that, in her death, one felt as though he had lost a very near and dear friend." In a similar way he immediately spoke highly of the newly ascended King Edward VII.

As M.W. Bro. Hungerford visited lodges and events around the jurisdiction, he made a custom of delivering a short speech before enjoying the hospitality of a banquet. He explained that when he spoke, he made sure that: "The most important points brought out were the qualifications, both mental and physical, of candidates for our ceremonies."

The administrative matters and jurisprudence that demanded the Grand Master's attention led to M.W. Bro. Hungerford making several rulings. These included: that voting in lodge by 'yeas' and 'nays' is not permissible; that Grand Lodge alone can confer Honorary Past Rank; and that Districts cannot impose a tax on the lodges in the district to pay for regalia for a past DDGM. He recommended that lodge Bylaws conform more closely to the Constitution.

One of the first tasks undertaken by our 19<sup>th</sup> Grand Master was to investigate the activities of Royal Solomon Mother Lodge No. 293 at Jerusalem. Communication with the lodge was erratic and supervision was difficult. M.W. Bro. Hungerford ordered the minutes books of the lodge were sent to Grand Lodge. The difficulties with the lodge persisted beyond the term of Grand Master Hungerford until the Warrant was cancelled in 1907.

M.W. Bro. Hungerford continued with the practice of administering a healing obligation to members of the "Grand Lodge of Ontario".

The Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada carried on with the mission of detecting imposters who were improperly seeking relief from Masonic Lodges. He continued as the President of the organization while he was Grand Master.

In closing his Address to the 1901 Grand Lodge Communication on July 17<sup>th</sup>, M.W. Bro. Hungerford stated: "I have endeavored to do my duty as my judgment prompted me. I have neglected nothing that demanded my immediate attention, and if I have even in a slight measure merited your approbation, I have been abundantly rewarded by the kindness and fraternal courtesy of my Brethren."

It was three weeks later that M.W. Bro. Richard Becher Hungerford suffered a stroke. He succumbed less than two months after a successful Grand Lodge Communication and the start of his second year as Grand Master. He was the second Grand Master in our jurisdiction to die while in office, M.W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson being the first.

R.W. Bro. John Elly Harding, the Deputy Grand Master, immediately assumed the office of Acting Grand Master to assure continuity of leadership for the Fraternity.

#### Sources:

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- (4) Herrington, W.S., and Foley, R.S., editor Dunlop, Wm. J. '*A History of the Grand Lodge A.F.&A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario*' (1955) McCallum Press Ltd., Toronto.
- (5) McLeod, Wallace editor, *Whence Come We?* (Hamilton, Grand Lodge of A.F.&A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario, 1980)
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- (9) *Proceedings of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Canada*, 1901.
- (10) *Globe and Mail* (August 24, 1901, p 12)