

Thomas Douglas Harington

Grand Master (1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864) of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario
Grand First Principal (1859 - 1861 and 1863 - 1872) of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada
Grand Master (1871 - 1872) of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Ontario (Cryptic Rite)
Sovereign Grand Commander (1874 - 1882) of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Dominion of Canada



Grand Lodge photo

(1808 - 1882)

Prepared by V.W. Bro. Marshall Kern.

Thomas Douglas Harington was born in Windsor, England, on June 7th, 1808. His early life was spent in the service of the Royal Navy, and then the navy of the Honorable East India Company. In July 1832, he came to Canada, landed at Quebec, and, after a short residence there, he moved inland to see the “great west country”. On November 1, 1832, he accepted the office of Extra Clerk to the Provincial Secretary of Lower Canada, and he rose to the rank of Chief Clerk. In May 1858, he was promoted to Deputy Receiver-General for the united provinces of Upper and Lower Canada and, in 1868, was reappointed to the same office under the Dominion of Canada, an office he held until his retirement in 1878. He was a member of the civil service for nearly fifty years.

During the rebellion in Upper Canada (1837 - 1838), he served as the paymaster with “The Queen’s Rangers” and rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

At the age of 20, while still in England, Thomas Douglas Harington married Sarah Isabella Bligh (1807 - 1851) on November 25, 1828. They had been married 23 years when she died. His second marriage was in Canada. On December 3, 1878, at the age of 70, and after he was Grand Master, he married Fanny Tomley (1838 - 1916). There were no children from either marriage.

Thomas Douglas Harington died at his home in Prescott, Ontario, on Friday, January 13, 1882. It was reported that he died of a sudden heart attack. His body was laid to rest in the “Blue Church Burying Ground” in Augusta, near the town of Prescott. The funeral was very well attended and reported in the newspapers of the day. The monument at his grave is inscribed with the Square and Compasses, and notes he was “Grand Master of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada in The Province of Ontario”.

Masonic Career

Mr. Thomas Douglas Harington was initiated into Freemasonry on December 13, 1843, in Duke of Leinster Lodge, No. 283 IC, Kingston. He affiliated with St. John’s Lodge, No. 758 ER, Kingston, on March 28, 1844. In July 1844, he was in Montreal and affiliated with St. George’s Lodge, No. 642 ER and No. 10 on the Provincial Registry of Montreal and William Henry (PRMWH), becoming Worshipful Master in 1845 and continuing in this office for four years. He also affiliated with the Lodge of Social and Military Virtues, No. 227 IC, Montreal, in May 1848, and was elected Worshipful Master in 1849. He withdrew from the Lodge in the same year on taking up an assignment in Quebec and where he affiliated with St. John’s Lodge, No. 214 ER, on December 10, 1851. That same evening, he was elected Worshipful Master and was re-elected for a period of four years. On December 27, 1854, he was elected to Honorary membership in St. John’s Lodge No. 214 ER.

That he was so keen to participate in the Masonic Lodges wherever he lived is a testament to his affection for Freemasonry. And the willingness of the brethren of those Lodges to accept him as a leader is evidence of his skill as a Mason.

He was appointed as the Deputy Provincial Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of Montreal and William Henry in 1848. This was followed by appointments as the second Provincial Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of Quebec and Three Rivers in 1852; Provincial Grand Master in the Provincial Grand Lodge of Lower Canada in 1853; and Provincial Grand Master of Canada East by the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1853.

His duties in the civil service necessitated a change of residence to Toronto, where he affiliated with St. Andrew's Lodge, No. 16 PRCW (now No. 16 GRC) on June 10, 1856. He was then accorded the rank of Past Grand Master of the Ancient Grand Lodge of Canada West in 1856.

In 1857, he resigned as Provincial Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of Quebec and Three Rivers. A year later he resigned as Provincial Grand Master of Canada East (Grand Lodge of Scotland). In June 1859, he became a charter member of Harington Lodge, No. 49, in the City of Quebec. The Lodge was named in his honour.

In 1859 he was elected Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada, serving under M.W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson, the first Grand Master. A year later he was elected to the rank of Grand Master in 1860, which office he held for five years.

When the Grand Lodge of Canada was established in 1855, Bro. Harington was initially opposed to its formation. His opposition appears to be shaped by the offices he held as a Provincial Grand Master under the authority of the United Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Lodge of Scotland. As he involved himself in correspondence with those Grand Lodges and conversations with the brethren seeking to form a new Grand Lodge of Canada, his position changed. He assisted materially in bringing about a peaceful solution of the then existing difficulties, by the union, in Toronto, of The Ancient Grand Lodge (formerly The Provincial Grand Lodge of Canada West) with the Grand Lodge of Canada in 1858. The ceremony of union of those two Grand Lodges was prepared by M.W. Bro. Harington. Contemporary accounts of the event show that harmony was achieved.

Subsequently he was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada for the years 1860 through 1864. At that time the Grand Master was elected for a one-year term and could be re-elected. He was the second Grand Master.

In Capitular Masonry, he became a charter member of St. John's Chapter, No. 214 SGCE (attached to St. John's Lodge, No. 214 ER), in Quebec. In 1852, he was appointed



Provincial Grand Superintendent of Royal Arch Masons for the City and District of Quebec and Dependencies. With his move to Toronto he resigned as Provincial Grand Superintendent of Quebec. On September 21, 1880, the Grand Chapter of Quebec was pleased to elect him an Honorary Member, following the precedent of the Grand Lodge of Quebec, which he had helped to set up in 1876. In Ontario, he took an active part in the formation of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada, and was elected Grand First Principal in 1859, which office he held to the close of 1871, except for the years 1861 - 1862 and 1862 - 1863 (when M. Ex. Comp. John Charles Franck presided as Grand First Principal).

In Cryptic Masonry, Bro. Harington received the degrees soon after the Rite's introduction to Canada, at St. John, NB, under a charter from the Grand Council of Maine, USA, dated May 18th, 1867. Three Councils of the Rite had been established in St. John as a nucleus for the formation of a Grand Council in that Province and on August 15, 1867, representatives of these Councils met in Convention and the Grand Council was regularly formed. Considerable progress was made, many companions were admitted, and other Councils were organized in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario. Sometime between the Annual Conventions, in St. John, of 1869 and 1870, Illustrious Companion Harington was appointed Inspector-General of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. When the Grand Council for Ontario was formed on August 8th, 1871, Ill. Comp. Harington presided over the deliberations of the Convention as Inspector-General for Ontario and Quebec. In consideration of services rendered to Cryptic Masonry in assisting to organize the Grand Council, the honorary rank of past Thrice Illustrious Master was conferred upon him by the newly formed Grand Council on August 8th, 1871. As a sequel to this event, he surrendered to the Convention the authority which he held as Inspector-General, accepting in place of it the office of Most Puissant Grand Master of the Cryptic Rite for Ontario, August 8th, 1871, which office he held for one year.

In Knights Templary, Companion Harington received his Orders in Hugh de Payens Encampment (now Hugh de Payens Preceptory, No. 1), Kingston, on April 10, 1854. Sir Kt. Harington was immediately appointed as Almoner. He became Eminent Commander of an Encampment established in Quebec City, on July 28th, 1855, under the name of "William de la More, the Martyr". This Encampment had but a fitful existence from its inception, and after a period of about twenty years, its warrant was surrendered and returned to England.

Shortly after becoming Eminent Commander of the Quebec Encampment, Em. Kt. Harington was transferred to Toronto where he affiliated with Geoffrey de St. Aldemar Encampment and was elected Eminent Commander in 1858. In 1855, he was appointed Very Eminent Provincial Grand Captain in command of the Column of Quebec. In 1856, he was promoted to Right Eminent Provincial Grand Prior of the Provincial Grand Conclave of Canada and, in 1859, elected as Deputy Provincial Grand Commander. He

retained this office until 1871, except for the years 1861 and 1862, when, through ill health, he was forced to relinquish the office.

In Constantinian Masonry, Bro. Harington was appointed as Inspector-General for the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

At a meeting of the Grand Lodge of Canada, then in session at London, Ontario, on July 10, 1868, W.J.B. McLeod Moore brought together a group of interested Masons and formally instituted Chapters of Rose Croix, located in the Cities of Hamilton and London, as well as a Consistory of the 32nd degree in Hamilton. Among those who received these degrees was Thomas Douglas Harington who, at the inaugural meeting of the Consistory was elected their first Commander in Chief. On July 14, 1868, Bro. Harington was created an Inspector-General, 33°, along with John W. Murton, 32° and Thompson Wilson, 18° of London.

On December 10, 1868, he was appointed as the Representative of the Rite in Canada. The Supreme Council for the Dominion of Canada was formed in Ottawa on October 16, 1874, with Ill. Bro. Harington as the Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander of the Council "Ad Vitam."

He was the first to receive the degrees of the Royal Order of Scotland, when it was introduced into Ontario in 1874.

After the death of M.W. Bro. Harington in 1882, the Masonic memorial service was attended by then-Grand Master M.W. Bro. James Moffat. He was assisted in these last offices paid to the departed by three Past Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the persons of M.W. Bro. Simpson (G.M. for 1864 – 1866), M.W. Bro. Seymour (G.M. for 1871 – 1872), and M.W. Bro. Stevenson (G.M. for 1868 – 1870). Also attending was Hon. Judge William Badgely, the Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Montreal and William Henry. The concordant bodies in which M.W. Bro. Harington had figured so prominently was represented by esteemed leaders including R.W. Bro. John Murton of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Canada, and Col. W.J.B. McLeod Moore of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada.

His grave remained unmarked until 1942. In 1904, a suggestion was made by John Ross Robertson, (in which the Grand Lodge of Canada concurred) that a monument should be placed to Harington's last resting place, but no action was taken. The proposal was reconsidered at the Annual Communication of July 1939 and the authority was renewed. Consequently, the fraternity of Brockville and District erected a suitable memorial, which was unveiled and dedicated on Sunday, June 14, 1942. The monument is decorated with the Square and Compasses emblem and is engraved to note his rank as Grand Master as well as the years he served in that office.

A portrait of then-R.W. Bro. Harington was painted circa 1852 when he was the Provincial Grand Master of Quebec and Three Rivers. It shows him wearing the insignia and regalia of this office. The portrait is displayed at Richardson Lodge No. 136 in Stouffville. Another portrait shows him at the age of 66 as the Sovereign Grand Inspector-General and first Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of Scottish Rite for Canada. This portrait is displayed in the Scottish Rite Cathedral in Hamilton.

As Grand Master

The second Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada was busy with a number of key administrative tasks. As reported in the Grand Lodge *Proceedings*, he issued many dispensations to form new lodges, authorized amalgamations when requested, and continued the process of issuing new Warrants to lodges within the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Canada who surrendered their Warrants issued by the Grand Lodges in the United Kingdom.

Benevolence, questions on the Constitution, the quality of the presentation of our Ritual, and recognition of visitors claiming to be Masons, are among the challenges decided by M.W. Bro. Harington. Examples of 'model Bylaws' for lodges, as well as proper minutes of lodge meetings, were prepared and shared.

The circumstances in the world also received attention from M.W. Bro. Harington. The Civil War in the United States continued during his time as Grand Master. Freemasonry was being challenged in Italy. Unrest in Mexico was a concern. Foreign and unauthorized Rituals were being sold. M.W. Bro. Harington asserted "we are not afraid of the poison – the best antidote is our own conduct."

The *Proceedings* for 1861 include a detailed report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence. This feature has continued in subsequent years. It shows the recognition being given by other Masonic Grand Lodges to the young Grand Lodge of Canada.

The *Proceedings* of Grand Lodge during the term of M.W. Bro. Harington shows the tight financial situation faced by the young Grand Lodge. A strict economy was enforced, even as benevolence was extended to those in need. And a fund was created "for the purpose of erecting and endowing the long-desired object of every true-hearted Canadian Mason – The Masonic Asylum."

M.W. Bro. Allan Napier MacNab died on August 8th, 1862. He had a significant presence in the history of Freemasonry in Canada. But the circumstances surrounding his death caused great concern because he had been an active Anglican through life and embraced Catholicism in the days before he died. Given the religious differences at that

time, there was no Masonic memorial service and M.W. Bro. Harington announced that his passing was “much regretted.”

During his long service in the office of Grand Master, there were several proposed amendments to the Constitution to set term limits. None of these proposals suggest dissatisfaction with the leadership of M.W. Bro. Harington, nor his predecessor M.W. Bro. Wilson. Eventually the custom, and then the constitutional revision, established a term of two years for the Grand Master.

M.W. Bro. John Ross Robertson wrote of M.W. Bro. Harington “To the revered company of these men of true faith, loyalty and honour, one more fitting companion is now added, for of a surety no man more true and faithful in his reliance upon his Divine Saviour, more loyal to his Queen and country, and more honourable and generous to his fellow men therein reposes, than Thomas Douglas Harington, my old, my true and valued friend, whom we all so deeply lament.”

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