

William Kirk Bailey

Grand Master (1971 – 1973) of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario



Photo from the Grand Lodge

(1904 – 1992)

This biography consists of a summary prepared by V.W. Bro. Marshall Kern, which is followed by an address prepared by R.W. Bro. Wallace McLeod that delivers a more complete vision of M.W. Bro. William Kirk Bailey.

William Kirk Bailey was born at Stirling, Hastings County, Ontario on January 17, 1904. Following elementary schooling in a rural school, and secondary schooling at Stirling High School, he taught for one year at a rural school in North Hastings. After his graduation from Toronto Normal School in 1924 he was a teacher, principal and administrator of the Toronto Elementary and Secondary Schools. He attended Queen's University to complete an Honours BA in Chemistry and Biology.



From 1924 to 1970, he was employed in schools in the Toronto area: teaching at John Fisher Public School, Oakwood Collegiate Institute and Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute; vice-principal at Bloor Collegiate Institute; principal of Riverdale and Lawrence Park Collegiate Institutes and Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools. As an administrator he was delegated to study school systems in Russia, Germany, Holland and to recruit teachers from Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia.

He married Mary Eleanor Langtry (1908 – 1992) of Carleton Place on July 3, 1934, and they had one son and two daughters.

The family were members of St. George's United Church, Toronto.

M. W. Bro. William Kirk Bailey died in Toronto on November 20, 1992. Interment is in Mont Nebo Cemetery, Spring Brook, Hastings County, Ontario. A simple flat monument marks the final resting place of M.W. Bro. William Kirk Bailey. While it does not have any Masonic symbols, it is inscribed with the words “Attained all of his goals”.

Masonic Career

Mr. William Kirk Bailey was initiated into Stirling Lodge No. 69, Stirling, on December 31, 1925. (In 2016, Franck Lodge No. 127 amalgamated into Stirling Lodge and the new lodge took the name Quinte Lodge No. 69. In 2020, United Lodge No. 29 and Quinte Lodge No. 69 amalgamated to form Trent Quinte Lodge No. 29, in Frankford, Ontario.)

He affiliated with Bay of Quinte Lodge No. 620, Thornhill, in 1932 and served as Worshipful Master in 1943. He was elected as District Deputy Grand Master of Toronto District B in 1950.

He was first appointed to the Board of General Purposes in 1959, and then elected for terms from 1961 through 1969. He was elected as Deputy Grand Master for the years 1969 – 1971. M.W. Bro. William Kirk Bailey was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario for the term of 1971 – 1973.

M.W. Bro. William Kirk Bailey was a charter member of Andor Gero Lodge No. 726, Etobicoke, in 1974. He was an affiliated member of University Lodge No. 496, Toronto.

In Capitular Masonry he was exalted in King Cyrus Chapter No. 232 GRC, Toronto.

Within Scottish Rite M.W. Bro. Bailey became a member of the Toronto Lodge of Perfection in 1951 and served as Thrice Puissant Grand Master in 1964. He was a



member of Toronto Chapter of Rose Croix, and Moore Sovereign Consistory, Hamilton. He was coroneted as an Honorary Inspector General 33° in 1966.

M.W. Bro. Bailey was the Grand Representative of the United Grand Lodge of England near our Grand Lodge.

The creation of The Heritage Lodge No. 730 at Cambridge owes its genesis to many people, perhaps the best remembered for his efforts being M.W. Bro. William Kirk Bailey. A Research Lodge with a clear focus on history, admitting members from across the province (and, today, from around the world) and which does no degree work.

As Past Grand Master

M.W. Bro. William Kirk Bailey served as the Grand Custodian of the Work for the Grand Lodge until 1985.

He served as President of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario from 1974 to 1986.

Sources:

- (1) Jenkyns, Michael *Biography of PGM William Kirk Bailey* Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario
- (2) *Annual Proceedings* of the Grand Lodge A.F.& A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario: 1972, 1973, 1993, 2016, 2020.
- (3) *Commemoration of the Graves of the Grand Masters*, December 2018. A project of the Museum and Archives Team.
- (4) *The Ontario Masonic Blue Book*, Published and Edited by David Hauraney, Print Master, Etobicoke, 2000.
- (5) Reynolds, John W., (2012) *An overview of some significant or interesting contributions during the terms of the Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario, revisited* 'The Architect' December 2012
- (6) Runnalls, J. Lawrence (1979) *Our Past Grand Masters* privately published.
- (7) Family information confirmed via Ancestry.com and FindAGrave.com.
- (8) Grand Lodge website on biographies of the Presidents of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario, www.masonicfoundation.on.ca/publications/bios.html.

Excerpt of an address delivered by R.W. Bro. Wallace McLeod at the Eighteenth Annual Heritage Lodge Banquet held on 29 January 2003, at the Scarborough Masonic Temple, Scarborough, Ontario. Used by specific permission of The Heritage Lodge No. 730.

The Charter members [of The Heritage Lodge No. 730] included only two Past Grand Masters, M.W. Bro. James N. Allan, Provincial Treasurer of Ontario, aged 82 (G.M. in 1965) and M.W. Bro. William K. Bailey, retired educational administrator, aged

73 (G.M. in 1971). The Lodge was Instituted on September 21, 1977, and was Constituted on September 23, 1978. At a later meeting, after the Consecration of the new Lodge had taken place, the Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Robert E. Davies, withdrew, and M.W. Bro. W.K. Bailey was invited to serve as the first Installing Master. And - one more detail - the first Past Grand Master who actually presented a research paper to The Heritage Lodge was W.K. Bailey, who in September 1979 told us about The Constitution of Grand Lodge 1855-1979. Who was this man who overcame the hostility to the notion of founding a Research Lodge, who chose to be a Charter Member, who served as the first Installing Master, and who presented a paper to the Lodge?

The 1820s and 1830s were an active time for emigration from Ireland to Upper Canada. My wife's ancestors came over from County Wexford in 1822, and settled in Cavan, Durham County, 10 miles west of Peterborough; and my mother's people came from County Limerick in 1828 and settled in Brock Township. And at some time in the 1830s, James Bailey, a tenant farmer from County Fermanagh, in Northern Ireland, emigrated to Canada, apparently settling in Hastings County.

His grandson, George Anderson Bailey (1883-1941), also a farmer was initiated into Masonry in Stirling Lodge, No. 69, in Stirling, 10 miles north of Belleville, on January 23, 1913, at the age of 30. He served as its Worshipful Master in 1920. He and his wife Mary Maude Kirk had seven children, and four of his sons were initiated into their father's lodge in their early twenties.

They All Eventually Became Officers Of Grand Lodge:

(1) William Kirk (1904-1992), initiated December 31, 1925, at the age of 21; the subject of the paper.

(2) Clarence Arthur (1908-1974), initiated April 16, 1931, at the age of 22. He affiliated with St. Francis Lodge No 24, Smith Falls, in 1946, and served as Master in 1955. He was elected District Deputy Grand Master of St. Lawrence District in 1971.

(3) George Gordon (1913-1995), initiated May 17, 1934, at the age of 21. He served as Master in 1951 and was named as Grand Standard Bearer in 1971.

(4) Ross Craig (1919-1982), initiated July 16, 1942, at the age of 23, He affiliated with Temple Lodge, No 666, Belleville in 1951, and served as Master in 1957. He was named as Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies in 1972.

William Kirk Bailey was born in Harold, Rowdon Township, Hastings County, Ontario, on September 17, 1904. He graduated from Toronto Normal School in 1924. Then, while teaching elementary classes at John Fisher Public School, he studied extramurally at Queen's University; in due course he was able to take away from teaching, to be a full-time student, and earned his Honours B.A. in chemistry and biology from Queen's University in 1931. After that, he taught successively at Oakwood

Collegiate (1931-1944), Lawrence Park Collegiate (1944-1946), and Bloor Collegiate (1946-1947), all in Toronto. Then he became an administrator, and was successively Principal of Riverdale Collegiate (1947-1957), and Lawrence Park Collegiate (1957-1964). He closed out his professional career by serving as Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools for Personnel (1964-1970). This responsibility involved studying the school systems in Russia, Germany, and Holland, and recruiting teachers from Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia.

On July 7, 1934, Bill Bailey married Mary Eleanor Langtry, of Carlton Place. They were the proud parents of three children, Robert Langtry, Sandra Eleanor, and Joan Kirk. Robert was initiated into Vittoria Lodge, No. 359, down near Lake Erie, on May 14, 1971, and served as Master in 1979.

Masonic Career

Bill Bailey was initiated into Masonry in his father's lodge, Stirling, No. 69, on December 31, 1925 - three months after his twenty-first birthday. He affiliated with Bay of Quinte Lodge, No. 620, in Toronto, in 1931, and served as its Master in 1943. He became District Deputy Grand Master of Toronto District B in 1950-51. He was a member of the Board of General Purposes 1959-69, and Chairman of the Committee on Masonic Education 1960-69. He offered himself as a possible Deputy Grand Master in 1967, but the electorate thought otherwise. Two years later he was more successful; he served as Deputy Grand Master 1969-71, and as Grand Master 1971-73. He was Custodian of the Work from 1973 to 1984. He became a Director of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario 1970-89; and served as its President, from 1974 to 1986.

We should be reminded of some of his accomplishments. This may help to explain why he deserves to be recognized as one of our great Grand Masters.

Here are some of these matters in which he dragged Grand Lodge, often kicking and screaming, into the modern age. During the years 1969-71, when he was Deputy Grand Master, he traveled around the Province, meeting Masons, getting in touch with the grassroots, taking the pulse of the Fraternity, and finding out what needed to be done. During those years of preparation, he encouraged the introduction of Regional Masonic Workshops, as one way of getting the opinions of the Brethren. The first ones were held in Port Hope, April 18, 1970, and in Woodbridge on April 25, 1970. They were really howling sessions where the Brethren were encouraged to speak out about their perceptions of the state of the Craft. Then, after two years of finding out what was needed, when he was in a position of authority, he acted. Here are some of the things he accomplished, then and later.

(1) According to the Constitution, Grand Lodge's Board of General Purposes is supposed to have the general care and regulation of all the concerns of Grand Lodge. Ever since 1878, the Board had met only once a year, which made its mandate

preposterous. In 1972, this man introduced regional meetings of the Board, which were certainly a step in the right direction.

(2) In 1905 John Ross Robertson had reported that in 1884 Grand Lodge expressed an opinion unfavourable to the use of liquor at the refreshment tables of lodges. And in 1948 a Grand Master's Ruling decreed that the use of spirituous liquors and other intoxicants was forbidden at Masonic gatherings, and in Masonic buildings. This ruling was honoured more in the breach than in the observance, particularly at evenings of the Installation. In 1972, this man rationalized the situation by issuing a directive that allowed the serving of alcoholic beverages on a few strictly delineated occasions.

(3) The official ritual had never been printed in this jurisdiction, except, from 1887 on, for those who reached the dizzy rank of Warden; all instruction in the ritual for new members and junior officers was supposed to be mouth to ear. (Of course, most Masons used bootleg copies of the Work, which were readily available in bookstores.) In 1972, this man arranged to have the Questions and Answers for the candidate printed for the first time. And two years later, in 1974, as Custodian of the Work, he authorized the printing of the whole ritual, for distribution to all the Brethren, once they had passed the Examination after Raising.

(4) The last educational book issued by Grand Lodge had been the Manual for Instructors, in 1948; it wasn't terribly good to start with and had not aged well. In 1972 this man set up two committees that were charged with the responsibility of producing new books. His experience as a personnel officer in public education helped him to assess the talents and enlist the services of those whom he met in his Masonic travels. And so he was able to suggest the names of many Brethren from all across the Province who could help in writing these new books. And, with their contributions, the committees were able to produce *Beyond the Pillars* (1973) and *Meeting the Challenge* (1976), Both of which were well received by the Brethren.

(5) Ever since 1935, the Book of Constitution had included an Appendix of Grand Masters' Rulings - 35 or so pages filled with regulations that had been issued in various years from 1859 on, arranged by subject matter. These were lots of fun to read, but they made the book almost unusable. In 1972, this man set up a committee to revise the Constitution completely, and the task was completed in 1979.

(6) For ten years, Grand Lodge had been holding its annual communication in the steamy environment of Cedarbrae Secondary School, on Markham Road near Lawrence Avenue, in Scarborough. In 1973, this man had it moved to the air-conditioned [Toronto] Royal York Hotel.

(7) Ever since the beginning of our Grand Lodge, the jurisdiction of a lodge extended in every direction halfway to the nearest lodge, except that of course special

arrangements could be made in cities and in certain districts in the north. As time passed, people began traveling faster and commuting further. And finally, in 1973, this man established a Committee to investigate the possibility of having concurrent jurisdiction within each district; the new practice was soon implemented.

(8) From 1945, Grand Lodge had forbidden any of our members to become associated with the Order of DeMolay, a fraternal order for boys, founded and administered by Freemasons. In 1973, this man recommended that the ruling be deleted. And likewise, in 1973, for the first time, he arranged that the representative of the concordant order of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada should attend Grand Lodge in an official capacity.

(9) In 1974, the total capital funds of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario stood at just over \$220,000, giving an income of \$13,000, which was pretty small potatoes. The very next year, this man, as President, began its first major fundraising Project, called HELP - Hearing for Every Living Person, which eventually raised \$620,000, and gave the Foundation enough resources to expand its activities. (The example was of course followed by the Project Help Nip Drugs in the Bud, which by 1989 raised over a million dollars; and the Millennium Project, HELP-2-HEAR, which by 2002 had raised over two million dollars. But this man set the pattern).

(10) After the Russian troops crushed a Hungarian attempt at liberalization in 1956, many Hungarian Masons escaped to Canada. The Grand Lodge under which they had worked had not been recognized by our Grand Lodge, and so they could not visit or affiliate with us. They continued to meet privately for some fourteen years, until finally this man (in collaboration with M.W. Bro. Harry L. Martyn) arranged for them to be regularized; by this means Andor Gero Lodge, No. 726, Toronto, was instituted on January 10, 1974. It continued to work and preserve its Hungarian heritage until the Iron Curtain collapsed and Freemasonry was revived in Hungary. Then, on November 15, 1990, Andor Gero Lodge surrendered its Charter.

(11) In 1861, when the Board of General Purposes was established, it had included about 30 members. By 1970, it had increased to nearly 100; and anybody who had to work with it quickly saw that it was unwieldy and unmanageable. For years this man campaigned for a smaller and more effective team to manage things. Finally, in July 1990, the Deputy Grand Master, R.W. Bro. Norman E. Byrne, recommended to the Board of General Purposes that a Management Committee should be established, and this was done.

This man also contributed substantially to the publications of Grand Lodge, which were published without disclosing which author wrote the various parts. Thus, in *Beyond the Pillars*, he wrote the chapter on *The Landmarks*. In a review that was printed in the *Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge* for 1973, the English scholar Cyril Batham called it as well-balanced an account as will be found anywhere. That's

not a bad record. I have looked at the achievements of many other Brethren, and none of their lists comes close to this one. We are fortunate that he worked so effectively for us.

Conclusion

William Kirk Bailey died, in his home, early in the afternoon of Friday November 20, 1992, at the age of 88 years 2 months, and 3 days, after 66 years as a Mason, and 49 years as a Past Master. What he did for Masonry constitutes a lasting monument. Anyone who accomplishes so much, causing Freemasonry to evolve out of the past, is bound to raise a few hackles. But Bill Bailey tried to keep on courteous terms with all Masons. And so at the end of his first Grand Master's Address he quoted the words of the American Masonic poet Edwin Markham (1852-1940), no doubt alluding to the manner in which he personally had dealt with those who were angry at him:

He drew a circle that shut me out -
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win.
We drew a circle that took him in.

Source:

McLeod, Wallace (2003) 'Our Fifty-Fifth Grand Master' in Proceedings of The Heritage Lodge No. 730, Vol. 26.