

A MASONIC MINUTE

The Certificate of a Master Mason

This document is the official record issued by the Grand Secretary under the name of the Grand Master attesting that the person to whom it is issued has been regularly Initiated, Passed, and Raised in the Three Degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry in a Lodge Warranted by the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario. In other words, it is the Mason's license to practice Freemasonry in this jurisdiction. As such it is a most important document to be signed, framed, and proudly displayed in a place of honour at home.

The form of this certificate is interesting in itself, containing many significant symbols illustrating the history of the Grand Lodge and many of the tools we have adopted and adapted from our ancient operative brethren. Its form is derived from the so-called 'pillar certificate' issued by the Grand Lodge of England, the mother Grand Lodge of the world. The certificate is dominated by the three great pillars in the three noble orders of architecture: Ionic (left), Corinthian (centre), and Doric (right) representing wisdom, beauty, and strength, identified with the square, plumb rule, and level respectively, connecting them to the three principal officers of the lodge as explained in the Junior Warden's Lecture in the First Degree. At the base of the central column are the Three Great Lights of Masonry: the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and Compasses.

Depicted upon a representation of the Mosaic Pavement at the bottom of the certificate, raised on three steps to symbolize the Three Degrees of Craft Masonry, are several working tools and implements of the stonemason's trade together with the Rough and Perfect Ashlars: maul and chisel, 24 inch gauge, and pencil. The Perfect Ashlar is fitted with that ingenious lifting device, the Lewis. Two Globes represent the universal nature of the global fraternity.

The engraving at the top illustrates the historical background of our Grand Lodge. We are reminded that when the Grand Lodge of Canada was instituted in 1855 it had jurisdiction in both Canada East and Canada West, represented by the two landscapes in the engraving. After Confederation in 1867, they formed the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario. Under 'an eye within a triangle' which is the jewel of the Grand Master, are the Royal Arms of Canada supported by the Lion and the Unicorn. Emblems of the British founding nations – rose, shamrock, and thistle with maple leaves entwined – surround the engraving.

Most important is the personal information it records: the name of the individual to whom it is issued, the Lodge and its number on the Register of the Grand Lodge

which he has joined, and the personal number assigned to him (in the lower right hand corner on the base of the Doric Column).

The Seal of the Grand Lodge is affixed at the left of the Grand Secretary's signature, making this an official document issued under the authority of the Grand Master. A full explanation of the heraldic symbols on the Coat of Arms may be found in Section 3 of the Constitution. The Latin Motto *Audi, Vide, Tace* is usually translated as "*hear, see, keep silent.*"

RSJD 2013

