

Joseph Richard Seymour

Founder of Scottish Rite Masonry In British Columbia

By Sublime Prince Evans F. Greer. 32°

Joseph Richard Seymour was born in St. Catharines, Ontario January 19th, 1858, died December 11, 1933 in his 77th year, and was buried in Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, B.C

As a boy he attended St. Paul Street Methodist Church and Sunday School, and later became a member of St. George's Anglican Church, St. Catharines. When he moved to British Columbia he became a member of Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver.

He attended St. Catharines public school and private school, also Grantham High School. On entering university he started to train for a doctor and later became a pharmacist because of a medical condition.

After graduating as a pharmacist he opened a drug store at 51 St. Paul Street, St. Catharines where the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce now stands at St. Paul and Queen Streets.

He married Adele Ann Adams who was born at Goderich, Ontario but lived in St. Catharines for a few years before they were married. There were four children by this union: two sons, Murton and Richard Ansley (Paper No. 84), also two daughters, both living at the present time and in Vancouver, B.C.

Business Career

About 1892 he moved to Vancouver and opened his first drug store there at Seymour and Hastings Streets. He later opened a second store at Granville and Georgia Streets opposite the C.P.R. hotel which has now been torn down. This hotel was called the "Vancouver" and was a magnificent edifice for that time.

About 1906 he sold both stores and went into real estate and insurance business called Seymour, Marshall, Storey and Blair. Mr. Marshall had been a druggist in St. Catharines, Ont. at one time. He carried on this business until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 at which time real estate in Vancouver suddenly took a downward trend.

He became interested in financial and insurance companies, being president of the Hudson's Bay Mortgage Corp. of Vancouver and vice-president of the North American Building and Loan Co. Brother Seymour was treasurer of the Vancouver Branch of the Red Cross during the Boer War and at the outbreak of the Great War (World War I) was made first vice-president of that organization. During the war he organized a Canadian Red Cross Association for the mainland of British Columbia and was active in Victory Loan promotion and in connection with the patriotic fund.

He later accepted a position as superintendent for the Vancouver Docks and remained on this job until the time of his passing.

Public Speaker

He was a good public speaker and was always in great demand to speak on Masonry and as a layman for the Anglican Church. He had a great interest in Masonry and his church. These were his main outside interests. He was president of the B.C. Conservative Association for a number of years and here again he was called on many times as a public speaker. He enjoyed the political hustings of a good campaign.

Illustrious Father

Although Joseph Richard Seymour was an Illustrious Mason he had a father who was an Illustrious Mason also (Paper No. 84).

His father was Grand Master of Grand Lodge of Canada, D.D.G.M. for two terms, Grand First Principal of Royal Arch Masons (Ontario) and Right Eminent in Knight Templar. He would no doubt have reached Supreme Grand Master of Knights Templar if it had not been for failing health during the last years. This record has only been exceeded by two other great Masons in Canada; a very fine gentleman, Reginald V. Harris, living in Halifax, Nova Scotia and the late Clarence McLeod Pitts. I would point out however, that this great Mason had the same standing in York Rite Masonry as James Seymour but he was also Supreme Grand Master in the Scottish Rite.

A recent event of historical significance took place in the Masonic Temple, Port Dalhousie Ward, St. Catharines on December 7, 1966 when Brother Murton Seymour presented Seymour Lodge No. 277 with the Master's Chair in memory of his Illustrious grandfather who had founded the lodge in 1872 when he was the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada in Ontario.

Sovereign Grand Inspector General

On April 22, 1930, our Illustrious Brother was entertained by the 20th degree team of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Valley of Portland, Oregon. Brother Seymour made the special trip to Portland, Oregon for the purpose of encouraging the exchange of fraternal visitations between jurisdictions, thereby aiding to create an increased friendly understanding and relationship between all members.

A Masonic history and picture of Brother Seymour was sent to all members of the 20th degree team before the visit so that they would be better acquainted with "J.R." or "Dick" as he was known. They pointed out with pride that this is a record of a high-principled, unselfish, democratic, dignified, and a kindly leader loved by all who knew him.

Civic Life

Of wonderful physique and striking, handsome appearance, one would expect, and justly so, that our brother was an outstanding figure in the public life of the City of Vancouver for many years and gained a prominent place on the roll of the City Pioneers. He was a leader in several important business enterprises; a well known churchman who took an active part in the establishment of the Anglican Theological College (with which he was still connected at the time of his death); a former chairman of the Vancouver School Board, a prominent Red Cross worker; and an ex-member of

the Soldiers Settlement Board. He was also Honorary Lay Secretary of the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster and lay Delegate to the Anglican General Synod.

Daughter's Memoirs

Adele Seymour, living in Vancouver, and named after her mother, writes: "He was head of the Royal Order of Scotland, which he instituted here by request from Scotland. He had a pleasing sense of humour and was quite merry, enjoying a good joke."

Masonic Medals

John Taylor, Oakville, Ontario, having access to these Jewels, describes them as follows:

1. First Principal's Jewel presented to our late Excellent Companion in 1913 by Royal Arch Masons, Chapter No. 98, Vancouver, B.C.
2. A *Jewel* presented to him in 1905 after he had been commander-in-chief of the Consistory.
3. Jewel of the Constituting Officer for the Okanagan Lodge of Perfection, Vernon, B.C., 21st, March, 1930.
4. A special Jewel presented to our Ill. Brother J. R. Seymour with a history etched on the back of his Masonic activities stating definitely that he had founded ancient and accepted Scottish Rite Masonry in British Columbia in 1895.

Masonic History

Our beloved Brother received the third degree in Masonry on June 8th, 1879 in Elgin Lodge No. 349, A.F. & A.M., St. Thomas, Ont., later affiliating with Temple Lodge No. 297, St. Catharines, Ont. where he was elected Worshipful Master in 1887 and re-elected to that office for two consecutive years.

On July 8, 1929, he celebrated his 50th Anniversary as a Craft Mason.

He received the 14° A. & A.S.R. in Murton Lodge of Perfection, Hamilton, Ont. in June 1892 and became a life member thereof.

Scottish Rite Masonry was not very active in British Columbia at the time Bro. Seymour took up his residence there, and he at once began an active campaign to establish a Lodge of Perfection, which campaign was eminently successful and the dispensation therefor granted in July 1896. So happily did this work progress that a charter was granted to Vancouver Lodge of Perfection on October 28, 1897, of which lodge Bro. Seymour became thrice Puissant Grand Master in 1898, retiring from that office in 1900.

Whilst visiting in the East (Ontario) in 1898, he received the 18° in the City of Hamilton, returning to Vancouver to receive almost immediately a dispensation for the establishment of a chapter of Rose Croix, upon the successful and earnest working of which a charter was granted October 25, 1902, Bro. Seymour becoming the Most Wise Sovereign the following year.

In 1905 a charter was granted for a Vancouver Consistory and Ill. Bro. Seymour became the first Commander-in-Chief, filling this position for three years. This

completed the establishing of the Scottish Rite with all its bodies for the valley of British Columbia.

Our Brother was appointed Special Deputy for the Province of British Columbia in 1901 and continued in that office until 1910.

The funeral service, most beautiful, solemnly impressive, was held on 14th December, 1933 from Christ Church Cathedral conducted by R.W. Bro. His Grace Archbishop De Pencier to Mountain View Cemetery.

The Soul of origin divine,
God's glorious image, freed from clay,
In heaven's eternal sphere shall shine
A star of day.

References

A. & A.S.R. records
12° A. & A.S.R. records, Portland, Oregon
John Taylor, Oakville
Adele Seymour, Vancouver
Murton Seymour, St. Catharines

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