

The multitudinous rituals of British Columbia and Yukon

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“There are far too many freemasons who believe Freemasonry was perfect and complete – on the day they were raised.” – Mark S. Dwor

In 1858, recently-arrived brethren in Victoria, a former Hudson’s Bay Company trading post in the nine-year-old British Colony of the Island of Vancouver and its Dependencies, petitioned England for a warrant. The warrant for Victoria Lodge No. 1085/783 arrived in 1860 and almost immediately the issue of ritual was raised. A growing number of affiliating members, and unaffiliated brethren, had learned their work in the United States and were unfamiliar with the English work. They soon petitioned Washington Territory for a warrant but – the constitution of an American lodge in a British colony being more than the British brethren would suffer – they then turned to Scotland. In 1862 Vancouver Lodge 421 SR was constituted, and there were now two lodges in Victoria, one using an English work — possibly that of Robert Burnaby’s mother lodge, Frederick Lodge of Unity No. 661 in Croydon, South London, and probably, according to Henry Holbrook, not Emulation work¹ — and the other using an American work from California – possibly the Barney work that had been adopted with few changes by the Baltimore Convention of 1843.²

New Westminster, the newly-established capital of the Crown Colony of British Columbia (Mainland), near the mouth of the Fraser River, also attracted its share of freemasons who, after some trials, also received a warrant from England in 1862 for Union Lodge No. 899. Although its members had come from England, Scotland, California, New York and Prince Edward Island, the lodge, under the influence of Henry Holbrook, a Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works for Cheshire, England, chose an English work, possibly Hemming’s.³

The two colonies became one in 1866. That year Nanaimo Lodge No. 1090 on Vancouver Island was warranted by England, to be constituted by Holbrook in 1867. The founding master, Captain William Hales Franklyn had been initiated into Grand Master’s Lodge No. 1, London, in 1841 and, quite probably, *The Perfect Ceremonies of Craft Masonry* was adopted. The actual rituals worked by Union Lodge and Nanaimo Lodge are unknown, as both lodges soon adopted an American work.

British Columbia Lodge No. 1187 also received its warrant from England in 1867 and soon two Grand Lodges were established in the colony, the District Grand Lodge of British Columbia under the United Grand Lodge of England, and the Provincial Grand Lodge of British Columbia under the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

Gold had been found in the Cariboo in 1862 and the next lodge was established deep in the colony’s interior. None of the founding members of Cariboo Lodge No. 469 in Barkerville were from English lodges so in 1867 they applied to the Provincial Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, Dr. Israel Wood Powell in Victoria. The lodge’s founding master, Jonathan Nutt, brought the ritual with him from California.

An amicable division of assets and debts — mostly debts — between the members of Nanaimo Lodge who preferred an English work and those who preferred something else led in 1869 to the constitution of Caledonia Lodge No. 478 SR. They adopted “The Scotch Work”,⁴ as the founding master William Stewart called the ritual he had brought with him from St. John’s Lodge No. 1 at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, a lodge originally constituted with an Antient warrant.

Two more lodges soon followed: Mount Hermon Lodge No. 491 SR at Hastings (present day Vancouver) in 1869, and Quadra Lodge No. 508 SR at Victoria in 1871. Thus, early in 1871 — the year British Columbia became Canada's sixth province — there were four lodges under the English Constitution and five under the Scottish. When it came time to discuss the formation of an independent Grand Lodge, outspoken members of Caledonia Lodge were only in favour if all lodges adopted their work. Although they didn't have their way at the time, it will be seen that many American practices were subsequently imposed on the minority English work lodges.

THE NEW GRAND LODGE

Union Lodge choosing not to join, there were five Scottish and three English lodges under the new Grand Lodge of British Columbia. At its constitution on 26 December 1871 there were 292 members, 183 using an American work and 109 using an English work. The earliest records of the Grand Lodge, the published *Proceedings of Convention* for a meeting held in Victoria on 21 October 1871, are silent on the question of ritual. Future *Proceedings* would make up for the lack.

The *Proceedings* of the communication held on 26 December 1871, include an address by the newly installed Grand Master, Dr. Israel Wood Powell. He talked about a uniform ritual but acknowledged the "English and Scottish Crafts" and their particular work, and recommended that any future lodges be allowed to "choose and adopt either ritual present practiced in the province."⁵

It is here, at the earliest moment, when the self-deception begins. No one commented that there were already more than two works. There were five lodges practicing some form of ritual taken from the United States and three lodges practicing some form of ritual taken from England. But were those eight lodges practicing only two works?

In 1872, Union Lodge surrendered its English warrant and had joined the new Grand Lodge as No. 9 — having missed the opportunity to be No. 2. Its ritual was English, but which English? Its founding Master, Henry Holbrook, had been initiated into Sincerity Lodge No. 368/292 at Liverpool but there is no extant record of him supplying the work used.

Less than three years later, on 20 February 1875 Grand Master Powell reported that "ceremonies appear to vary and as a subsequence lose their beauty and interest" due to the fact that the lodges "were allowed to continue the practice of the rituals peculiar to each". He strongly recommended the adoption of uniform work.⁶ Later that day a resolution to adopt a uniform ritual was debated, and lost, followed by a resolution to refer the matter to the Board of General Purposes with instructions to consult with the lodges and raise the question at the next annual communication.

The next year the Grand Master, Simeon Duck, reported that "the disadvantages of Double Ritual" were not yet sufficiently understood and he thought the question required further consideration, much to the regret of the committee struck to review his address who strongly felt it was time to end the practice of "dual Ritual". Regardless, no resolution was brought forward that year.

By 1877 the new Grand Lodge had lost three lodges due to, in some measure, a local economic downturn. In 1873 Nanaimo Lodge had combined with Caledonia Lodge to form Ashlar Lodge No. 3, using the "Scotch" work. Victoria Lodge and British Columbia Lodge united as Victoria-Columbia Lodge No. 1 in 1877, further reducing the English work lodges. The same year, Vancouver Lodge and Quadra Lodge consolidated, and Union Lodge voted to

abandon the English work and adopt the “Scotch”. A fire in 1891 destroyed many of Union Lodge’s records, and it is unknown what work was actually used.

Nine lodges — four English and five Scotch — were reduced to six, five using some form of American ritual, one using the Emulation *Perfect Ceremonies*. This would influence ritual practices in this jurisdiction for the next century.

Ritual was unmentioned at the 1880 annual communication although the brethren found time, over the objection of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, to recognize the newly-constituted Grand Lodge of New South Wales — extended in 1889 to the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. This would have a later influence on ritual practices.

The following year, 1881, the Grand Lodge of New South Wales conferred on the Grand Secretary of British Columbia, Edgar Crow Baker, the rank and title of Past Grand Warden of its Grand Lodge. In his review of its *Proceedings* he especially noted, with some satisfaction, that the founding 23 English, 16 “Scotch” and 6 Irish lodges had desired a “uniformity of ritual.” A notice of motion, unrelated to ritual but reflecting the different practice of American lodges, was made to require Master Masons to submit to examination as soon as possible after receiving the degree. Nothing more was heard of this motion although with a jurisdiction-wide membership of 308, by this time only 62 brethren were using an English ritual and there would have been little resistance to such a move.

With the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the province’s interior in 1885, Kamloops embarked on a period of rapid growth and development with Kamloops Lodge No. 10, warranted in 1886, adopting the Oxford work, or Viscount Valentia’s *Ritus Droniensis*. It was rewritten by the lodge in 1990 when they published their own book, apparently without the knowledge or approval of the Grand Lodge Ritual Committee.

Kamloops Lodge was very active and played a key rôle in the formation of a number of daughter lodges, only one of which, Spallumcheen Lodge No. 13 at Armstrong, adopted the Oxford work, the others choosing American or Canadian works. Spallumcheen Lodge later abandoned Oxford for the Ontario work in 1912.⁷

The issue of uniformity was raised again in 1887 when Grand Lodge adopted a resolution proposed by Sibree Clarke:

“ *Resolved*, That this Grand Lodge, composed of Representatives working under different rituals, fully recognizes the desirability of securing uniformity of work throughout this jurisdiction.”

Dr. Sibree Clarke, then Master of Kamloops Lodge and later Grand Master for 1893-94, may have had Mountain Lodge No. 11 in mind. The officers, mostly coming from Ontario with the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, chose to use the Ontario work, compiled by Provincial Grand Master of Canada, Simon McGillivray in 1823 and worked in the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario. To someone unfamiliar with English work it would have appeared the same as Emulation. Clarke would have immediately seen the difference.

The ratio of American work to English work lodges (loosely defined) was now five to three although in the following year warrants were issued to new lodges that also adopted the Ontario work. A resolution in 1888 to adopt “a uniform system of work and lectures” was, after considerable debate and amendment, referred to committee. This was also the year that the geographically large jurisdiction was divided into four districts with the appointment of District Deputy Grand Masters.⁸

The year 1889 is an important one in our story. A special communication of Grand Lodge was held at Vancouver on 29 March to exemplify the ritual in the three degrees “as practiced by the various lodges in the jurisdiction.” Victoria Columbia Lodge worked its degrees that evening. On Saturday morning Vancouver and Quadra Lodge conferred a first degree followed in the afternoon by Mount Hermon Lodge No. 7 and Union Lodge conferring a second degree. Before calling off for dinner, Kamloops Lodge exemplified its opening and closing. That evening Cascade Lodge No. 12 exemplified all three degrees. The evening was closed with Ashlar Lodge “exhibiting” the third degree.

As a result of that meeting, at the annual communication in June 1889 a resolution was proposed that all new lodges, and any existing lodges that choose, should work “in conformity with the York Rite of Masonry.” An amendment to permit “the English, the Scottish or York Rite, and the Ritual of the Grand Lodge of Canada” failed, as did the original resolution. A quixotic resolution by the Master of Victoria Columbia Lodge to adopt “the English Ritual” for all lodges was withdrawn.

Three years were to pass until Grand Master, Marcus Wolfe, ruled in 1892 that Spallumcheen Lodge — using Oxford work — should conduct all business other than conferral of the lower degrees in the Master Mason degree, because “the whole spirit and tenor of masonic custom has been that the business of the lodge should be conducted in the third degree.” He went on to say that “... notwithstanding lodges of the English and Canadian work, transact business (other than degree work) in a lodge opened on the first degree (even within our own jurisdiction) yet in my opinion it is contrary to masonic jurisprudence, general usage, established custom, and above all, contrary to our *Constitution*.”⁹ He also ruled that no brother could be a member of more than one lodge at a time, further illustrating the influence of American practice on his thinking.

In 1890 a resolution to require the examination of Master Masons had been, on division, lost. Two years later the *Constitution* was amended to require all twelve lodges to examine Master Masons after receiving their degrees.¹⁰ It was also in 1892 that the question of a uniform ritual of burial service was raised, but no decision was made until the following year when a service was adopted, compiled from that used in Ontario and the various services used by the lodges of this jurisdiction.

A significant moment in the development of British Columbia ritual occurred at the annual communication in 1893 with a recommendation from an *ad hoc* Ritual Committee that would permit existing lodges to continue in their several practices but restrict future lodges to one of the English as practiced by Victoria Columbia Lodge, the “Scotch” as practiced by Ashlar Lodge and the Canadian as practiced by Cascade Lodge.¹¹ Whether or not this recommendation was adopted is a question of some controversy. Although the *Proceedings* do not report its adoption, the committee chairman, Marcus Wolfe believed that it had been.¹² If the recommendation had been adopted, it was not universally accepted and a watered down version was later adopted in 1909. Either way, these were phrased as recommendations and not the *diktats* that future advocates of uniformity believed them to be.

A special communication was called in 1894 to adopt the revised *Constitutions*, including a ruling by William Downie, Grand Master for 1892-1893, that all business be transacted in a lodge of Master Masons, contrary to the established practice of the English works. Representatives from ten of the 17 constituted lodges attended, five using American work and five using some English form. As is usual in masonic affairs, no tally was recorded but with

thirteen of the twenty-seven delegates hailing from American work lodges, they obviously persuaded at least five of the other delegates to abandon their lodges' usual practice to achieve the required two-thirds majority. The ballot was quite probably very close and the Grand Master in 1895 made veiled reference in his annual address to "vexatious differences which tend to creep into our assemblies."

The annual communication that year adopted the Ontario installation ceremony as used in Manitoba, although revisions were made in 1910, 1921, and 1942.¹³ It is unclear under what authority this happened: there was no Ritual Committee at the time and no reference in the Grand Lodge *Proceedings* to changes or additions being proposed other than for funerals. Revised editions of the *Book of Forms and Ceremonies* simply appeared.

After twenty-five years of discussion on exactly how the ritual work should be done, the Grand Master for 1895-1896, Lacey R. Johnson appeared tired with the brethren's preoccupation: "...beautiful and instructive as our ritual may be, it is simply the shadow, the substance is not in it..." The ritual is the key but "Masonic Truth" is found in how we live our lives. No one listened.

The following year the issue of uniformity was raised again by the District Deputy Grand Master for District 2 who remarked "I was struck by the numerous slight differences in phraseology, *etc.*, in the lodges doing work according to the York Rite." He recommended the appointment of a lecturer to instruct a standard work. The committee appointed to review the District Deputy Grand Master's (DDGM) reports suggested a more frequent exchange of visitors to secure uniformity. This, we will discover, had the opposite effect.

One lodge in that district, Acacia Lodge, feeling the lack of a published ritual, had been the first to adopt Ralph P. Lester's *Look to the East!* (1876), an unauthorized text described by one reviewer as "dubious."

The 1881 recommendation that "every brother shall prove his proficiency in the Master Mason degree as soon as possible after the same has been conferred," defeated in 1890, approved in 1892, and omitted from the *Constitutions* adopted at a special communication in 1894, was again adopted in 1899. Once again no record of the vote was taken, but 52 of the 83 voting attendees were from American work lodges – well over the two-thirds required for passage. A committee was also appointed by the Grand Master to investigate the lodges working the "Canadian Ritual" as they were "in some respects at variance," and to "unify the Canadian Work as practiced."¹⁴

In 1900 a committee to rearrange the opening and closing ceremonies of the Canadian ritual reported that they had given the matter considerable attention and were of the opinion that no change should be made to current lodge practices.¹⁵ Harry H. Watson, later Grand Master for 1900-1901, who had been on the committee, later recalled that Cascade Lodge had always conducted business in the Entered Apprentice degree and when William Downie required all lodges to work in the Master Mason degree, many Canadian lodges started opening directly into that degree.¹⁶

The proper name for the American work continued to be a problem, with Watson, referring to the work as "York" while others referred to it as "Scotch" or "American." He recommended the appointment of "an official instructor in each of the three works recognized in this jurisdiction" but the committee appointed to review his report considered this fraught with difficulty and referred it to Grand Lodge. No action was taken. At the turn of the century, there

were now 31 lodges scattered across a large geography, and there was little chance of imposing uniformity.

In 1902 the DDGM for Kamloops District 3 noted the non-uniformity of work although the following year the DDGM for District 7 in the southeast corner of the province reported that the York rite had been adopted by all the lodges of his district and that a uniformity of work had nearly been accomplished. The proximity to the American border, and the popular use of “stereopticon views” when presenting lectures may have promoted both the use of the American work and a certain uniformity. The DDGM for Vancouver Island District 5 lamented the “many inaccuracies and differences” in the work even though all the lodges had selected the work of Ashlar Lodge, whose work he feared had changed with the constant change in officers. He too called for the appointment of a Grand Lecturer, a sentiment endorsed by the committee reviewing the Grand Master’s reports. This recommendation was referred back to the committee, to no effect.

Yet another ritual work was introduced into the jurisdiction in 1906 shortly after John “J. J.” Miller arrived from Cootamundra, Australia. Miller promoted the use of the ritual of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales — created in 1888, in part, from the ritual of Canongate Kilwinning No. 2 of Edinburgh — and founded Lodge Southern Cross No. 44 in 1907. A century later Lodge Southern Cross’s historian discovered that what it had styled the “Australian Work” owed as much to J. J. Miller as it did to Canongate Kilwinning and the lodge returned to the original text, with the addition of a Master Mason examination. Only two lodges have used the work; the other, Commonwealth Lodge No. 156, was constituted in 1954. Recommendations to Grand Lodge in 2005 and 2007 to adopt the ritual of New South Wales as the “BC Australian Work” were not acted upon. This was probably just as well since neither lodge was using the same work, nor at the time did either work coincide with that of New South Wales. The work adopted by New South Wales in 1906 was finally adopted as the “BC Australian Work” in 2009.

Also in 1907 two lodges in the northern Yukon Territory, Yukon Lodge No. 79/45 and White Horse 81/46, originally under the Grand Lodge of Manitoba, petitioned for warrants, bringing Manitoba’s version of the Ontario work with them.¹⁷ When the Deputy Grand Master visited them in 1911 he noted their “Emulation work,” commenting, without detail, that it conflicted with the *Constitution* “in some parts.”

With 53 lodges on the roll, in 1909 the Grand Master, William K. Houston declared that “the question of uniformity” should once again be taken up, asking that a committee of Past Grand Masters be appointed to bring in a report at the next annual communication. The committeemen appointed to review his address, Past Grand Masters all, were of the opinion that such an undertaking would be impractical. They did recommend that all lodges “endeavor to follow the workings” as practiced by Victoria Columbia Lodge, Ashlar Lodge or Cascade Lodge. This recommendation was adopted by Grand Lodge.¹⁸ No mention was made of Lodge Southern Cross and its “Australian” work. It is unclear if Houston was promoting one uniform work for the jurisdiction or uniformity within the authorized works. With four lodges using Emulation, 27 using American, 21 using Canadian, and one lone Australian work lodge, the question of a uniform work would have been contentious, which was perhaps why no committee was struck.

A rewritten *Constitutions* was adopted in 1910 and Eli Harrison Jr was appointed to take the text and compile what was styled *The Masonic Code of British Columbia* in 1912. Harrison perpetuated, intentionally or not, an historical error that continues to bedevil any discussion of

uniformity of ritual: the claim that the 1893 recommendation regarding three rituals was approved.¹⁹

Dr. William A. DeWolf-Smith, whose reviews of other jurisdictions enlivened the *Annual Proceedings* from 1897 to 1942 and earned him an entry in Dodd's *Representative British Freemasons* (1915), first weighed in on the question of ritual in 1910 when reviewing the *Proceedings* from Iowa, expressing his distaste for printed ritual: "it lowers the dignity and importance of correct ritualistic work in the minds of the brethren."²⁰ Elected Grand Secretary in 1911, and serving until 1937, he would later have more to say on the topic. Two years later, Past Grand Master, Francis J. Burd, called for printed monitors for the American and Canadian works, expressing his belief that the differences between the Emulation, Oxford, Stability, Australian and Canadian being so small, a uniform work would be welcomed by the brethren.²¹ The committee reviewing his address expressed the opinion that due to the diversity of ritual the time had not yet arrived for the adoption of a monitor, and an attempt to adopt the Grand Master's recommendation was lost upon motion.²² And the battle lines were drawn.

Burd — who would be appointed to the influential Jurisprudence Committee in 1918 and serve as chairman until his death in 1962 — was aware of the multiplicity of ritual but never appeared to truly understand the loyalty felt to the many variations. To his mind, the unique version of Emulation published in 1839 and used by St. Andrew's Lodge No. 49,²³ the *Perfect Ceremonies* of Victoria Columbia Lodge, the Stability work of Duke of Connaught Lodge No. 64 or the Oxford work of Kamloops Lodge, not to mention the Ontario work and its Manitoba variant, were all of a piece. If the lodges would not adopt a uniform work, he would use his, not inconsiderable, influence to at least see that they used a uniform installation and burial ceremony, conform to the American practice of examining Master Masons, and open in the Master Mason degree. This last, as has been seen, had unexpected consequences, with the growth of unauthorized short-form openings.

In the other camp, Grand Secretary DeWolf-Smith, in his Report on Foreign Correspondence in 1914, noted with bemusement that a DDGM in Ontario wished to compel his lodges "to require their candidates to pass an examination in the work of the Third Degree before receiving their MM certificates." He also noted that a Past Grand Master in Ontario felt that trouble was sure to come from Alberta's use of two rituals, responding that there was no trouble with the use of more than two rituals in British Columbia.²⁴ Again and again as the years passed he would take opportunity in his extensive reviews on foreign proceedings to express his support of ritual diversity.

Attempts by Grand Masters to promote uniformity were generally rebuffed: Grand Master James Stark recommended the restoration of the "Scotch" installation ceremony for the use of American work lodges in 1915. Wallace S. Terry recommended "Schools of Instruction" or some other assistance to create uniformity within the three works in 1919. Andrew McCreery recommended the same in 1923 although he was "quite ready to admit that the *lessons*, and not the *form*, should more largely engage our attention."²⁵ Charles E. Tisdall in 1923 called for uniformity. Henry Morley in 1932 remarked that the topic "appeared to be the signal for fireworks" but also called for uniformity. Rarely were the committees appointed to review the Grand Masters' addresses supportive. Although the committees appointed to review the DDGMs reports often recommended uniformity within the three principal works, the appointment of a committee to review or determine ritual, or the appointment of a Grand Lecturer, no actual resolutions were brought to Grand Lodge.

The question of ritual was also of issue within the lodges. Union Lodge was the first to change its work, in their case from English to American, but not the last. Prince David Lodge No. 101 previously using the “Ontario rite” switched to the “Scotch rite” in 1924. Mount St. Paul Lodge No. 109, constituted at Kamloops in 1924, had first adopted the American work used by Union Lodge but in 1959 it switched to *Look to the East!* and by 1974 had adopted the 1962 authorized BC Ancient Work, as had Acacia Lodge.

Over the years DDGMs bemoaned the “...constantly increasing diversity in the manner of exemplifying the work” and “increasing number of minor innovations” — lamented that there was “a decided difference in the work of the several lodges” and generally attempted to impose or promote uniformity. Lodges of Instruction established in the Vancouver area created some sense of uniformity in the 1930s but it was discovered that what was developing was less a uniform work than a “buffet” with lodges picking and choosing from each other’s ritual, whether it was English, American or Canadian.

The issue of ritual continued to attract attention in the 1930s and 1940s but there was a growing acceptance that there would never be one uniform ritual and that at best there might be uniformity imposed on the Canadian and American work lodges. The myth that the early “Scotch” work was from Scotland was finally laid to rest in 1933 with Grand Historian, Robie L. Reid identifying it as the Webb or Webb-Preston work.

It wasn’t until 1946 that the Education and Research Committee noted that although three lodges had been established as models in 1893, no one living could declare with certainty exactly what those rituals were, and since then “noticeable variations in the several forms of the work” were on the increase. They felt it was time for Grand Lodge to establish “some form, or forms, of a standard ritual.” Considerable discussion followed, some favouring a standard ritual, but more, it seemed, favouring diversity. In 1949 the committee reported that uniformity in the work was “neither possible nor desirable” but still felt there was a need for approved rituals or codes of instruction in the various workings. In a controversial revelation, it was pointed out that the 1893 recommendation regarding the three works had never been adopted and therefore lodges were free to adopt any ritual they may choose.²⁶

The next important period in the development of British Columbia ritual was 1950-1952 when extensive reports from a special committee on rituals were received by Grand Lodge. Reporting input from 118 of 129 lodges, there were at that time 59 lodges using Canadian work, 58 using American work, 11 using English and one using that of New South Wales. Only seven claimed to be following Ashlar Lodge’s American work, 21 followed Cascade Lodge’s Canadian work, and none claimed to follow Victoria Columbia’s English work. Those that followed Ashlar or Cascade also admitted to some important points of difference.

The big revelation was that it had become the practice in almost half the Canadian work lodges to either open directly in the Master Mason degree or use some variant of a short form — a practice that continued until a constitutional change in 2002 permitted work in any degree.

Concerns were expressed in the 1951 report. American work lodges were conferring part of the Master Mason degree “at refreshment.” Note was made to “faulty grammar, wrong words, bad composition, incongruities, improper emphases, lack of expression, and incorrect pronunciations.” The committee confirmed that the 1893 restriction to three works was never adopted.²⁷

With 61 lodges using ritual books from Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta, 13 lodges using *Perfect Ceremonies* or their own versions of Emulation, Oxford or Stability, and 60 lodges using *Look to the East!*, various American monitors or exposures, or their own manuscript versions of Webb or Barney, “a bewildering complexity” had arisen. The use of “exemplar lodges,” was perhaps a practice unique to British Columbia; it was certainly “a new idea” to masonic author H. L. Haywood when asked about practices in British Columbia lodges. As the jurisdiction entered its ninth decade in 1952 a recommendation was adopted to follow the practice of most other English-speaking jurisdictions and draft a printed guide.²⁸ Finally in 1955, the *BC Canadian Work*, based on the Ontario model, was approved, apparently without great debate.

The Grand Master for 1953, Laurence Healey, a perspicacious Irishman who later served as chairman of the Committee on Education and Research for many years, had noted the “minor details of particular rituals,” and advised his DDGMs to “avoid becoming involved in local disputes about matters which are not of vital importance.”²⁹ No one listened and the bickering continued.

In 1959 a motion was proposed to permit Emulation and Canadian work lodges to transact business in the first degree “as such lodges have done from time immemorial” but failed for lack of a second. Another motion to permit business in the lower degrees was defeated in 1974. It took eight attempts over the next quarter century until 2002, when lodges were again permitted to work in any degree. Since then there have been two defeated motions to reverse that decision.

In 1962, after much discussion, the *British Columbia York Rite* was approved for voluntary adoption by existing lodges, and required by new lodges “practicing the York Rite.” Few liked the name and in 1963 the name was changed to *British Columbia Ancient York Work*. By the time printed copies were available, the name had been changed to *British Columbia ‘Ancient’ Work*. This work was, in the main, yet another variant of the Webb working.

There now being two authorized rituals to rally around, it took four years of failed resolutions until the Committee on Ritual was made a standing committee in 1965. The following year the Grand Master, James H. McKergow – who had affiliated from Scotland into an American work lodge – felt it necessary to note at length in his annual address that he had ruled that there were only four works in the jurisdiction, dividing the Canadian work into the “new” post 1955 work and an imaginary uniform Canadian work that had preceded it, and the American work into a similarly imaginary uniform pre-1962 ritual and the British Columbia “Ancient” work of 1962. He also assumed that the many English works could all indiscriminately be labeled Emulation. This only further cemented the historical errors.

The majority of the thirteen lodges claiming to use the Emulation work were reported in 1969 to prefer *The Perfect Ceremonies of Craft Masonry*. The committee’s recommendation that any lodge choosing Emulation in the future be required to use this book was adopted.³⁰

Curiously, the committee, and Grand Lodge, did not consider the issue of ritual closed. Rather than prohibit any future changes in ritual, changes were expected to be submitted to the committee for review and, if approved, to Grand Lodge for adoption. Having basically settled the question of ritual uniformity, the committee turned its attention in the mid-1970s to the penalties and their place in the obligations. The committee in 1979 also recommended the adoption of a Board of Installed Masters ceremony “for guidance of all installing masters,” a phrase that would later be widely misunderstood.³¹ A decade later, and with new members on

the committee, in 1989 it claimed that a “uniform ritual” for the board of installed masters had been adopted in 1979, when in fact it had been adopted as a guide. The claim was made again in 1995.

Several motions in the 1980s to either relocate the penalties or add the word “symbolic” or “historic” or “traditional” failed to pass, and by 1990 four lodges, tired of waiting, took the committee up on its 1969 offer to consider changes to individual lodge ritual, and submitted their variations on the penalties.³² The committee recommended approval without detailing the changes in its report, and the committee’s recommendation was approved by Grand Lodge. It didn’t do any harm that two members of the committee were vocal proponents of the changes. Two further motions brought before Grand Lodge in 1997 and 1998 failed to gain support to remove the penalties from the obligation in the authorized works, and nothing further has been heard on that issue.

Other changes have been made to the ritual, not necessarily to the words, but to the rubrics and floor work. In 1988 the Grand Master, David L. Gibson, ruled that brethren should stand, coming to the sign of fidelity when the volume of sacred law is opened or closed in the three degrees, or in the Board of Installed Masters ceremony.³³ This was contrary to Emulation usage, and that of many Canadian working lodges, but even though his ruling expired at the end of his term, most lodges continued the practice.

As the millennium approached, the Ritual Committee became increasingly strident about uniform ritual, reporting in 1998 that “as early as 1878, this Grand Lodge has held that uniformity of ritual was essential,” claiming to quote the 1878 *Constitutions*: “lodges using either system should be uniform in the use of whichever ritual they used.” In fact, the *Constitutions* of 1871 gave Grand Lodge the power “of establishing and preserving a uniform system of work.”³⁴ This was amended in 1878 to give the power “of preserving the established systems of work and lectures.”³⁵ Not the same thing.

The committee further promoted the myth of uniformity in 1998 by referring to the Australian and Emulation works without pointing out that *Perfect Ceremonies*, adopted in 1968, was not to be imposed on existing lodges, and no specific Australian work had been adopted. In 1999 the committee reported what they perceived to be a creeping lack of conformity and again in 2000 claimed that there was only one form of the Board of Installed Masters ceremony, interpreting the phrase “for guidance” to mean that no other form was permitted. In the following years there was a growing concern that ritual was being read.

In 2003 the committee expressed its concern regarding short form openings, an issue that one expected would fade away as the constitutional requirement for lodges to work in the Master Mason degree was removed in 2002. They mistakenly cited Watson’s 1900 report on Canadian work as supporting their position and went on to recommend that Grand Honours could only be given in a Master Mason lodge. The recommendation was not adopted. In an about-face, the following year a recommendation was made by the committee to allow Grand Honours in any degree. This was adopted.

From that time, until the present, the Ritual Committee has occupied itself with the ceremonies of installation, masonic funerals and memorial services. The concerns regarding reading ritual continued unabated. Disregarding the history that has been reviewed in this paper, in 2013 the committee claimed, “in over 100 years of written *Proceedings* and committee decisions of this Grand Lodge that the brethren intended and were clear in stating that our accepted rituals not be tampered with nor accept innovation.” They then repeated the 1969

committee recommendation that all proposals for change should be submitted for review by Grand Lodge.

Recent concerns have included the introduction of the circle of friendship — found in the Excellent Master ritual — into a tyled lodge and the use of a chamber of reflection before the Entered Apprentice degrees. The committee has disapproved for now, but only time will tell.

“UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY”

There are some fifty different Craft rituals or workings in England and some eighteen named workings in practice in the London area alone. There are perhaps 49 variants of the Preston, Webb and Barney rituals worked in the USA.³⁶ Under the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia there are lodges using the Preston-Webb work, one using the “Modern Scottish Ritual”, six using the Emulation work translated into as many different languages, and one using the “Ancient & Accepted Scottish Ritual”. Other instances of diversity can readily be found.

If there is anything unique about the diversity of ritual in British Columbia and Yukon it is the single-mindedness of many brethren to find uniformity where none ever existed; it is a century and a half long struggle to impose personal interpretations of uniformity and the resistance to that imposition. It is our history.

29 June 2016 (revised 30 March 2017, 5 September 2018, 26 August 2019, 17 December 2019)

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1. Robert Burnaby, Past Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies for the County of Surrey and later elected Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia in 1871, was not a founding member of Victoria Lodge but installed the first officers and at the first emergent meeting in October 1860 gave the “instruction in the first degree.” He later affiliated and served as master in 1863.
 2. Roscoe Pound, “The Causes of Divergence in Ritual.” *Proceedings*, Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 1915. pp. 1915-143; also *New England Craftsman*, vol. xiii, no. 11, August 1918. p. 325.
 3. John T. Marshall, *History of Grand Lodge of British Columbia A.F & A.M*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge, 1972. p. 465.
 4. William Stewart had misnamed the Scotch Work. Having only been a member of St. John’s Lodge No. 1 in Prince Edward Island for less than a year before he relocated to Vancouver’s Island, he had misunderstood that jurisdiction’s history. Prince Edward Island lodges had been using a Scottish working—very similar to Emulation—until the year that Stewart joined the lodge, when they had switched to the Webb working. Stewart either misunderstood or misremembered what he had been told about the ritual and insisted on referring to the Webb working as Scotch.
 5. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1872. p. 26.
 6. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1875. p. 8.
 7. Frank Wright, *History of Kamloops*, 1950; Jon Broadberry, *Second Decade*, 2009.
 8. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1888. p. 99.
 9. Marcus Wolfe, “Grand Master’s Address”, *Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1892. p. 25.
 10. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1892. pp. 74-75.
 11. “Report of Ritual Committee”, *Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1893. p. 57.
 12. Cf. “I may state, Bro. Robbins, that the Committee’s report on “Ritual” (1893) was adopted.” Marcus Wolfe, “Report of Committee on Foreign Correspondence.” Victoria : *Annual Proceedings*, Grand Lodge of British Columbia, Appendix. p. 33. John T. Marshall in his *History*, p. 461, accepts this claim without question.
 13. John T. Marshall, *History of Grand Lodge of British Columbia A.F & A.M*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge, 1972. p. 605.
 14. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1899. p. 69.
 15. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1900. p. 60.
 16. Robie L. Reid *Historical Notes and Biographical Sketches*. Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1945. p. 220.
 17. Manitoba had seen its own bitter controversy over the adoption of a uniform work, from its constitution in 1875 until 1879 when a motion, on amendment, permitted the use of either the American York or Ontario works.
 18. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1909. p. 74.
 19. E. Harrison, *The Masonic Code British Columbia*. Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, . 103. See *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1950, p 137.
 20. “Reviews”, *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1910. p. 18.
 21. *Annual Proceedings*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1912. p. 55.
 22. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1912. p. 109.
 23. *Outlines Adapted both to State and Territorial Associations Arranged by The Committee of the Central Convention*. Clairville: Printed at the ‘Sentinel’ Office. 1839. This long-out-of-print text is considered the source of what became the Ontario work in 1859.
 24. “Reviews,” *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1915. p. 14.
 25. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1923. p. 29.
 26. “Report of Committee of Education and Research”, *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver: Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1949. p. 119.
 27. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1950. p. 137.
 28. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1952, pp. 115-19.

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29. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1953. p. 92.
 30. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1969. p. 139.
 31. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1979. p. 93.
 32. Ionic, Malahat, Mount Hope and Mount Zion. Duke of Connaught requested other, unreported changes.
 33. *Annual Proceedings*, Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, "Grand Master's Address", 1989. p. 17.
 34. Sec. 18, *Constitutions and General Regulations*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1871. pp. 23-24.
 35. Sec. 18, *Revised Constitutions and General Regulations*, Victoria : Grand Lodge of British Columbia, 1878. p. 71.
 36. Harry Carr, cited by John E. Taylor, *Rituals in Canadian Masonic Jurisdictions*. skirret.com/papers/rituals_in_canada.html , accessed 2016/06/21. David Harrison, *The Rituals of Freemasonry, Part 1*. dr-david-harrison.com/freemasonry/the-rituals-of-freemasonry-part-1, accessed 2016/06/16.