

Alexander James Anderson, KC, MP

Grand Master (1935 – 1937) of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario



*Photo from the Grand Lodge*

(1863 -- 1946)

*Prepared by V.W. Bro. Marshall Kern.*

Alexander James Anderson was born July 1 at Strathroy, Ontario in 1863. After completing his elementary and secondary schooling at Strathroy Collegiate Institute, he completed studies in law at Osgoode Hall. He entered the law profession. He was one of the first lawyers in Old Toronto Junction neighbourhood.

In his business career he became President of Ajax Oil and Gas Company.

Alexander J. Anderson had a long career as a politician. He was the first Alderman to represent West Toronto after its annexation by Toronto. In 1925 he was elected to the

federal riding of High Park and represented the riding for almost 20 years until his death. He was a member of the Conservative Party.

He was an active Orangeman and a member of McCormach Loyal Orange Lodge of West Toronto.

He was a member of Victoria Presbyterian Church.

Alexander J. Anderson married Emilie Adelaide (1856 – 1920) on 19 August 1890. They had one son and one daughter. After her death he remarried; Anna Susie Lister (1874 – 1938) on 15 February 1922.

At the age of 82 he died on June 3, 1946, at his home in Toronto. Alexander James Anderson is buried at Prospect Cemetery in Toronto. His family monument does not have Masonic emblems.

### **Masonic Career**

Mr. Alexander James Anderson was initiated into Stanley Lodge, No. 426 GRC, Toronto in 1893 and served as Worshipful Master for 1900. He was a charter member of General Mercer Lodge, No. 548 GRC, Toronto and served as its first Worshipful Master in 1919. He was elected as DDGM of Toronto District A in 1907. He was a member of the Board of General Purposes (1921-1933). He was elected as Deputy Grand Master (1933-34 and 1934-35) and as Grand Master (1935-36 and 1936-37).

M.W. Bro. Anderson was a member of Shekinah Chapter RAM No. 138, Toronto. He was also a member of Geoffrey de St. Aldemar Preceptory, Knights Templar, No. 2, Toronto.

In Scottish Rite, M.W. Bro. Alexander was a member of the Toronto Lodge of Perfection. He was a member of Rameses Temple (Shriners), Toronto. In addition to these concordant bodies, M.W. Bro. Anderson was one of the originators and served as the President of the Annette Street Masonic Temple.

M.W. Bro. Anderson was given the honorary rank of Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Michigan.

### **As Grand Master**

As our 37<sup>th</sup> Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Anderson traveled extensively within our jurisdiction, including the ceremonies to lay two cornerstones.

After the death of King George V on January 20, 1936, M.W. Bro. Anderson ordered lodge altars to be draped and a period of mourning last for three months.

The economic situation of Canada in the mid-1930s was recognized as M.W. Bro. Anderson commented that the number of applicants had declined. He was pleased to see that many lodges filled the time normally devote to degrees with Masonic Education. He did admonish brethren to support their lodge by regularly and frequently attending. Further he strongly encouraged promptness, dignity, and every effort be made to make lodge meetings interesting. M.W. Bro. Alexander also said that Masonic meetings should not continue past midnight. He was concerned that intemperance in the length of social hours is as injurious as other forms of intemperance are. "Our ancient Brethren were not provided with alluring entertainment, but attended their Lodge through the earnest desire to join with their brethren in the advancement of the best there is in life." Visitation was encouraged as a way to create "unanimity of aim and outlook and produces harmony".

His ongoing attention to the conduct of lodge meetings included defining the proper form of the first Toast proposed at Masonic banquets. Thus, the first Toast, the Loyal Toast, is properly "The King and the Craft".

Economic circumstances, particularly the number of unemployed men in Canada, caused him to address the recurring concern about non-payment of dues. M.W. Bro. Anderson reminded lodge officers and senior members that they should approach a Mason in arrears, to determine his circumstances. If the members of the lodge are able to extend benevolence, they should do so. The lodge may also decide to remit dues so as to preserve the Masonic privileges of a good man and Mason.

The Lending Library at the Masonic Temple, 888 Yonge Street, was opened under M.W. Bro. Alexander's term as Grand Master.

M.W. Bro. Anderson attended a special meeting of the Grand Lodge of Scotland on St. Andrews Day, the 30th of November 1936. The purpose was to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the institution of that Grand Lodge, the third Grand Lodge instituted in the world. An offer had been made to the Prince of Wales to be installed as Grand Master. Owing to the death of King George V in January of 1936, the Prince of Wales immediately became King Edward VIII. King Edward VIII deferred and suggested the Duke of York be approached to be Grand Master. This was done, and the offer accepted. The ceremony of installation of the Grand Master Mason of the Grand Lodge of Scotland on St. Andrews Day with over 3000 Masons assembled to witness the event. Just ten days later, M.W. Bro. Anderson noted that he happened to be in London on the day that King Edward VIII abdicated, and the Duke of York (the new Grand Master Mason of the Grand Lodge of Scotland) was proclaimed King George VI.

He took immediate action to assure the new King of the loyalty of the Masons of Ontario.

Requests from lodges to hold lotteries or games of chance to raise funds had reached M.W. Bro. Anderson. He opposed and denied these requests as being contrary to Masonic law.

International affairs became a concern to M.W. Bro. Anderson when Masonry was banned in Russia, Germany, Italy, and Spain. M.W. Bro. Anderson stated: "in viewing the fate of Freemasonry in those countries we see the disastrous results of the abolition of individual freedom and the crushing out of religious thought and worship." He added that "dictators and tyrants have always opposed Freemasonry because its membership have usually been found on the side of right, fighting for freedom of worship, thought, speech and action." He closed his address at the Grand Lodge Communication with the exhortation: "Every man carries within himself a spark of divine fire. Nothing can quench it. It will flash again, and the dismal ghastly time in which we are living, shall be looked back upon with amazement, when once again the Spirit of God touches the better parts of our own nature in Lodge, in Church, in all phases of our life, and brings back and makes effective those truths, which if ever they were true, are true forever."

#### Sources:

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- (4) Herrington, W.S., and Foley, R.S., editor Dunlop, Wm. J. 'A History of the Grand Lodge A.F.&A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario' (1955) McCallum Press Ltd., Toronto.
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