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Jan 8, 1919

ADDRESS OF L. A. BURLEIGH BEFORE ABNAKI CLUB

Review of Events Which Led to Erection of Masonic Temple, and Formation of Abnaki Club—Leading Features of the Club's His- tory—Its Standing and Influence in the Community

At the request of several members of the Masonic Fraternity, we publish herewith the complete text of the address delivered by Lewis A. Burleigh before the Abnaki Club on Wednesday evening.

Brethren of the Abnaki Club:

In the year in which Presidential candidate Bryan was indulging in the free and unlimited coinage of speeches at the ratio of 16 to McKinley's 1, the first President of this club went over to City Hall one evening to deliver a political address. The first speaker of the evening was a handsome and gifted young lawyer. The second was Orville D. Baker. The third was our club's first President—Herbert M. Heath. I was present on that occasion, and remember that Mr. Heath commenced his remarks by saying that he couldn't quite decide whether his place on the program was assigned on the theory that the last is the best, or that the first was the worst. I now see the humor of that remark. I didn't then, for I was the handsome and gifted young lawyer who led off in the speaking.

That was the first big boost I got toward the second stage of that three-stop journey wherein a man with my limitations first classifies himself as an orator, later as a fool, and lastly as an honest man. The proof of my honesty is in this uncamouflaged typewritten manuscript, which eloquently testifies to the immortal truth that I am no orator.

There are some men like John Nelson and Norman Bassett whose minds are intellectual frying pans, always kept at the right temperature for cooking. They stand behind the quick lunch counter, with their white aprons on, always alert and ready for business. They will grab a mental egg, take an intellectual cup of sour milk, a teaspoonful of moral soda, a little psychological salt, and some metaphysical flour, mix them into a philosophical batter, and cook, while you wait, an oratorical griddle cake, that will make your mouth water. It is true that Webster doesn't define an orator as an intellectual flap jack artist, but in this era of reconstruction there are interesting possibilities in the next revised edition.

Now, what is a man to do who makes no pretensions to oratory? There's just one way to get by, and that is to make his audience the orators—eloquent, but inaudible. Press the button of a series of events in which they personally participated, and they will mentally do the rest. And that is why I am going to ask you to review with me some of the events that led to the formation of this Club, then to listen to a little of its history, and finally to a few sound and sage remarks about club life in general and the relation of this Club to the community of which it is a part.

There are four possible starting points from which I might work down to the present time:

First, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden.

Second, Noah and the Ark.

Third, the building of King Solomon's Temple.

Fourth, the first Masonic Hall in Augusta.

At the risk of being accused of a lack of thoroughness, I am going to commence with the first Masonic Hall in Augusta. It was located in the brick banking house of the Kennebec Bank, the first banking institution in Augusta, which was built near where the steps from Court street ascend to the present Court House.

The next location was in the Wingate Block on the west side of Water street, second block north from Market Square.

From there the Masons moved into the third story of the Hunt Block, which now takes in the Devine, Beane & Cross, and Nathan Richmond stores.

Then they were driven from their comfortable quarters by the great fire of September 17, 1865, and sought temporary refuge in the attic hall in Darby Block, Water street.

In 1866 a location was secured in the upper story of what was then the Freeman's National Bank and by subsequent expansion we found ourselves occupying the third floor of three different blocks. The Lodge Room was over what is now the north part of the Bussell & Weston Block, the Anteroom and Prelate's Room were next north in the Whitehouse Block, and the Banquet Hall was north of that, in the Block now owned by the Augusta Real Estate Association.

Thus matters stood on the crisp and spiky morning of January 1, 1894, when the lilacs and laburnums, lit with the glory fires of a new year, hung burning and flashing in the upper air; the larch and the pomegranate flung their purple and yellow flames in brilliant broad splashes along the slanting sweep of the woodland; the sensuous fragrance of innumerable deciduous flowers rose upon the swooning atmosphere; and far in the empty sky a solitary oesophagus slept upon motionless wing.

How does that sound? I borrowed that quotation from Mark Twain's Double Barrelled Detective Story. There isn't a word of sense in it, but Mark sprung it on an unsuspecting public, and I have sprung it on you as a slick and smooth sounding introduction to that wonderful year of 1894.

It was some year, believe me. The handsome and gifted young attorney to whom I have previously alluded was elected City Clerk in March of that year, returning immediately to Cambridge to complete his course at the Harvard Law School, from which

he was graduated in June, Frank E. Southard serving as Deputy City during his absence. In October the young attorney was admitted to the bar, was married immediately afterwards, and a little later was caught in the joyful swirl of the remarkable Masonic activity of that memorable year.

On one occasion he found himself in the company of two of his brethren of Augusta Lodge, and being somewhat weary, sat down to rest and refresh himself. On rising he accidentally took hold of something which easily giving way excited his curiosity, at which he hailed his companions, thereby giving himself dead away to his father, who was receiving his third degree that evening.

Some of our prominent brethren assert that the building of the present Masonic Temple was the cause, others that it was the result of the great boom in Masonry that was in progress in 1894. I think they are both right. The boom had certainly started before that year, but the building of the new Temple was a great factor in maintaining and increasing it.

I'm leading up all the time to the origin of the Abnaki Club. Perhaps you hadn't noticed that. As a matter of fact it has escaped my own observation, but if you will be patient I think I will get there sometime or other. But the road to the Abnaki Club leads me through the history of the erection of this Temple and to one of my artistic sensibilities the temptation is irresistible to make a few slight sketches by the wayside.

The work of the preliminary committee of 20—five from each of the four Masonic bodies—the determination to build, the drafting by Hon. Herbert M. Heath on April 18, 1894 of the subscription contract for the organization of the Augusta Masonic Building Company, the enthusiastic meeting at which 102 men, every one of them Masons, subscribed for the entire \$40,000 of stock of the new Company; the purchase of the land from Edwin C. Burleigh, Thomas H. Lang and Eugene Whitehouse, the employment of John C. Spofford of Boston as the architect, and the laying of the cornerstone on June 14, 1894, with elaborate and imposing ceremonies, are events of fascinating interest to Augusta Masons, which will doubtless be adequately set forth by the historian at the semi-centennial celebration which we expect to occur in 1944. I have promised myself the pleasure of attending with my ear trumpet on that occasion, which will be shortly after my 75th birthday.

These are merely matters of history, but the unique and skilfully executed plan of organization which was worked out by Mr. Heath is a living reality with which we as Masons will continue to have very practical relations for many years to come, and it is worth our while to understand it.

The title to the Masonic Temple property is vested in the Augusta Masonic Building Company, a corporation organized on May 14, 1894. It was capitalized at \$40,000, \$25,000 being a 4½% preferred stock, and \$15,000 being a 6% cumulative common stock.

The company executed two trust mortgages on the premises. The first was dated September 24, 1894, and gave a first lien on the property to three trustees, who have no duties to perform and no right to take possession or control of the property in any way until the Company defaults in the payment of its interest to the preferred stockholders, for whom these trustees are to act in that event.

Subject to this trust for the preferred stockholders, the second mortgage, dated Nov. 9, 1894, gives a lien on the prop-

erty to another board of seven trustees for the common stockholders. Three of these trustees are elected by vote of the common stockholders, and each one of the four Masonic bodies chooses one of the remaining four. Ever since the completion of the building, this board has had complete possession and control of the property. After paying all expenses, and the stipulated interest to the preferred and common stockholders, it is the duty of the trustees to apply the surplus income to the retirement, by lot, first of the common and then of the preferred stock. When all the stock is cancelled (including that now held as an investment by the several Masonic bodies), the premises are to be released to trustees representing the Commandery, Chapter, and the two Blue Lodges, respectively, or such of them as shall then be in existence, each body to have an equal interest in the property from that time on. The Scottish Rite bodies did not exist in Augusta at the time of this organization, and will not be invested with any part of the ultimate title to the property.

The present holding of stock of the Augusta Masonic Building Company is as follows:

	Preferred	Common	Total
Trinity Commandery	\$1,010	\$2,380	\$3,390
Cushnoc R. A. Chapter			
.....	3,110	2,300	5,410
Bethlehem Lodge.....	1,900	350	2,250
Augusta Lodge.....	610	800	1,410
	\$6,630	\$5,830	\$12,460
Held by others.....	18,370	920	19,290
Total stock outstanding	\$25,000	\$6,750	\$31,750

Aside from the four Masonic bodies, there are 27 holders of preferred stock, and six holders of common.

The common stock has been reduced from \$15,000 to \$6,750, a total retirement since 1894 of \$8,250.

The present board of trustees for the common stockholders is as follows: George E. Macomber, W. G. Boothby, W. H. Gannett, elected by common stockholders; C. W. Jones, for the Commandery; F. W. Plaisted, for the Chapter; L. L. Cooper, for Bethlehem Lodge; M. S. Campbell, for Augusta Lodge; F. W. Plaisted is president of the board; W. G. Boothby is secretary, treasurer, and custodian of the building.

Practically all of the money for furnishing the Temple was raised in 1895 at the great masonic fair held on the five nights of February 18 to 22 inclusive. There were exhibitions and entertainments, both amateur and professional, a gypsy fortune teller, a potter's wheel, Bohemian glass blowers, displays by local merchants, sales of fancy articles and confectionery, a fish pond, and a Punch and Judy show.

Who does that sound like? You've guessed it. Yes, Frederick W. Plaisted was Chairman of the Fair Committee, and Edwin C. Dudley treasurer, and when we copped the kale, and raked in the last buck, the size of our little pot was nearly \$6000.

The voting contests were spirited. Martin Reynolds won the bull calf contributed by Hon. Joseph H. Manley, and P. O. Vickery romped in an easy winner of the gold headed cane. Among the lady prize winners were the following:

50 cigars, Miss —, also Miss —.
100 cigars, Mrs. —; order for 25 shaves, Miss —; order for 50 shaves, Miss —; \$8 trousers to measure, Miss —.

And now I pass from parent to child—from the Temple to the Club.

I believe that we have the honor of being the first purely masonic club in Maine, meaning by that a club in which any Master Mason is eligible to membership. The idea of forming a Knight Templar Club had been discussed in Trinity Commandery, and in Bangor the Melita—a Commandery Club, had existed for many years. But there were no general Masonic Clubs in the State in 1894, though since then they have been organized in Waterville, Bangor, Portland, Rockland and elsewhere.

The time and the conditions were ripe for the organization of such a Club in 1894, and yet to be quite honest about the matter its formation in that particular year was largely due to the prosaic fact that the rooms on the south, or blind, side of the Temple could not be rented as offices at that time. It is difficult to realize now the condition of the old wooden buildings at the south end of Water street in 1894. It seriously affected rental values. So when, at the organization meeting of the Augusta Masonic Building Company, Governor Hill asked what was to be done with the rooms on the south, the suggestion that a masonic club be organized met with immediate favor, and it proved to be very little effort to start it.

There were 125 original members who paid a membership fee of \$25 each. With that money the Club was furnished and decorated and the hardwood floors put in. The Masonic Building Company allowed the Club what it would have cost to have made regular offices, the Club standing the balance of the expense.

The Indian name of Cushnoc was in quite general use, and there was a social club in Waterville called the Canibas club so at the suggestion of Capt. Charles E. Nash, the Indian name Abnaki was adopted, meaning "Those looking toward the rising sun." Fortunately for the success of the Club this definition was not incorporated in the By-Laws as a qualification for membership, though doubtless some of us occasionally look at the rising sun before slipping the latch key in the front door and stealing softly upstairs.

Plans for the Club rooms were worked out by architect John C. Spofford, with the assistance of General W. S. Choate.

The formalities of corporate organization were attended to by Honorable Herbert M. Heath. The first step was an application dated June 16, 1894, and addressed to Herbert M. Heath, justice of the peace, requesting him to issue his warrant to one of the 19 applicants, requiring him to call the organization meeting. The warrant was accordingly issued to General W. S. Choate, who called the meeting in the statutory manner, and on July 2, 1894, at 7 P. M., the corporate organization was completed at the old masonic banquet hall.

The first officers of this Club were then elected, as follows:

H. M. Heath, president; F. W. Plaisted, vice president; James E. Blanchard, secretary and treasurer; W. S. Choate, Jos. E. Badger, F. A. Small, Nathan Weston, M. S. Campbell, directors.

The record doesn't show what else they did in the banquet hall that evening, but it does disclose the presence of certain rotund and portly charter members, of aldermanic proportions and propensities, which somehow, to quote Shakespeare, links up the unrecorded proceedings to "a fair round belly with good capon lined."

From this auspicious beginning we have grown and prospered, have convinced the doubters and silenced the cavilers.

We have both demonstrated and vindicated the proposition that a dry club can exist and prosper. It is true that I find the following vote of the Executive Committee recorded on January 11, 1907:

"Voted: To dispense with spring water—and to use city water in the tank."

The record doesn't show whose tank, but some of our charter members were still with us.

Though the Abnaki Club is a purely masonic organization, with its active membership limited to 150, it has been in a way a public institution. With the exception of Governor Plaisted, who is an active member, every Governor of Maine since 1894 has been made an honorary member of this club. Its doors have always been open by express invitation to the members of the Maine Senate and House of Representatives and the Governor's Council, in legislative years, and cards tendering the privileges of the Club have been sent them at the commencement of each session. Visitors have always been welcome, and the Visitors' Register, which was started in July, 1895, is a pretty good record of the prominent citizens of the State who have visited Augusta during the last quarter of a century. Citizens Committees for Legislative receptions have used it for their meeting place.

I mention these things only in passing, for the essential and vital feature of our Club life—the thing which makes it delightful, the thing which makes us all love it, and the thing which will ensure its permanency and usefulness, is its spirit of absolute democracy and equality. It is typically masonic, it is ideally American. It measures a man by his character, not by his pocket book. It knows no aristocracy save that of good fellowship. Men meet here on the level and part upon the square.

At the annual meeting in January, 1918, the following votes were passed:

"On motion by George H. Bangs, it was the pleasure of the members to remit all dues of members then in the service of either the army or navy."

"On motion by S. C. Webster it was the pleasure of the members present that a service flag be placed at the front of the club rooms having on it a star for each member then in service and to add a star for each member that enlisted thereafter."

"On motion of S. C. Webster it was the pleasure of the members that a card be placed on the entrance door of the club rooms making welcome to the club rooms all members of the army and navy during the continuance of the war."

This club isn't gathering any moss as it grows older. On the contrary, it's rolling up pep. We're going past the quarter century post on July 2, 1919, with our nostrils distended, our fetlock fluttering in the breeze, and our tail in the air. Perhaps I've mixed my metaphors a little, and I'm not quite sure that a racing stallion sticks his tail in the air as he passes the quarter mile post, but you get my meaning, which is that we're absorbing a lot of pep.

President Mooney is certainly to be congratulated on his administration, and his chief of staff has been Perley Lawrence, whom I hereby decorate with the iron cross—omitting the kisses. Why, when I think of what Perley has accomplished, and the 21st

century methods he has employed--when I gaze about me and find that our club rooms have had a Turkish bath, followed by a hair cut, shave and shampoo, and when I realize that everything about the club is so sweet and clean that the balls are kissing each other on the new billiard table--then it is that I feel inspired to paraphrase the deathless song of "Sally in Our Alley," and to sing these words to all the world:

"Of all the sports with pep and snap
There's none like pretty Perley;
If you want to see his coat tails flap
You'll have to rise damned early."

Now, what is there in this club life of ours that is good for a man? Bridge, cribbage, checkers, chess, billiards, pool, papers, magazines, rest, comfort, cigars, cigarettes and chewing gum? Yes, all that, but more important still, intercourse with his fellows. But sometimes a man is so depressed and weary that he doesn't want to talk. Very well. He doesn't have to. He can take his paper or his magazine and read or think in peace, but the talk, and the laughter, and the cheery human pres-

ence of those about him may serve as a sedative to jangled nerves, and a tonic to depressed spirits. To keep normal, and wholesome, and happy, we need companionship, we need relaxation, we need the gentle mental stimulus of a friendly exchange of thoughts. If we are hermetically sealed within our little egg-shell, there comes a time when the egg becomes--well, let us say noticeably affected by the natural process of decay. Then there are the card, billiard, pool, checker and chess tournaments which are to be staged this year by Perley Lawrence. In my last club billiard tournament I was matched with P. O. Vickery. It was nip and tuck all the way through, but P. O. beat me in the end. Of course he was pleased to win--we all are--but he was the kind of a good sport that could have extracted pleasure from his own defeat by thinking of the other fellow's pleasure. You can all understand that it was a pleasure to play with a man like that, and a pleasant pain to lose to him.

Clubs and club life in both Europe and America are far too firmly entrenched to be either suppressed or supplanted. They may have a far-reaching influence for good or for evil in the life of a community, a state, or a nation. They may become a hotbed of political scandal-mongering and intriguing, as did the English coffee houses of the later Stuart period; they may be a menace to organized society, like the anarchists' clubs of our day; or they may be founded on the bed rock principle of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It is on that basis that we fill our niche in the community life of Augusta.

We are proud of our Masonic origin and ancestry, and venture the hope that we are still worthy of them. If we might send a message across the silent river to our departed brethren, I think we could assure them that we still have with us and back of us the finest elements of a city and county that are fine enough for the finest man to live in.

