Review of Events Which Led to Erection of Masonic Temple, and Formation of Abnaki Club—Leading Features of the Club's History—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.

Before the Abnaki Club: In the year in which Presidential candidate Bryan was indulging in the free and unlimited coined speech at the rate of 16 to McKinley's 1, the first President of this Club went over to City Hall and said, in a way to deliver a political address. The first speaker of the evening was a handsome and gifted young lawyer. The speech was not entirely without a point, but the third of our first President, Herbert H. Heath, was present on that occasion. Heath commenced his remarks by saying that he couldn't quite decide whether his speech or the speech that was assigned on the theory that the last was the best, or that the first was the worst. Heath was the author of that remark. I didn't then, for I was the handsome and gifted young lawyer who led off in the speaking.

At the conclusion of the program, 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 lies in my unsigned typewritten manuscript, which eloquently testifies to the immortal truth that I am neither an orator, nor a fool, nor an honest man.

There were some men like John Nelson and Norman Bossert 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 sit and observe their griddle cakes, that will make your mouth water. It is true that Webster doesn't define an orator as an intellectual flip jack artist, but in this era of reconstruction there are interesting possibilities in the next revised edition of the dictionary.

Now, what is a man to do who makes no pretensions to oratory? The man who is least likely to be overawed by the thought that is to make his audience the orators—eloquent, inaudible. Possibly you have been in a room where there was a young attorney, 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 sounds 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 that year, returning immediately to the present time:

First, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden.
Second, Noah and the Ark.
Third, the founding 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. This structure was built in 1871. I have located the steps from Court Street ascend to the present Court House.

From there we move on to the Wingate Block on the west side of Water street, second block from Market Square.

Then they were driven from their comfortable quarters by the great fire of September 17, 1885, and sought temporary refuge in the attic hall in Darby Block, Water street.

In 1886 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 Preble'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 spicy morning of January 1, 1894. When the illacae 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 flowers, as the larks sang on the distant hilltops, and in the empty sky a solitary seagull slept upon motionless wings.

How does that sound? I borrowed that quotation from Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court." There isn't a word of sense in it, but Mark sprang it on an unsuspecting audience in his book and have been quoting it on your ear, 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 1894. I have promised myself the pleasure of attending with my ear trumpets on that occasion, which will be shortly after my 57th birthday.

Subject to this trust for the preferred stockholders, the second mortgage, dated Nov. 9, 1894, gives a lien on the prop-
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 Masonic club had been discussed in Trinity Commandery, and in Bangor the Melita—a Commandery of the York Rite—had been founded. But there were no general Masonic Clubs in the State in 1894, though they have then been organized in Waterbury, Portland, Rockland, and elsewhere.

The time and the conditions were right for the organization of a club in 1894, and yet to be quite honest about the matter its formation in that year was 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. A local group of Masons, we are advised, to be very little effort to start it.

There were 125 original members who paid a membership fee of $25 to 125, a total of $3,125. The Masonic club was organized met the pleasure of the members present. The idea of forming a Masonic club was the desire of the members to have a club of a Masonic, it is ideally American. It measures a man by his character, and his chief of staff has been Perley a club in that particular year was largely due to the fact that we're absorbing a lot of pep.

This club isn't gathering any moss as the great Masonic fair on the fifth of May, 1898, is exclusive. 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 chapter show.

Who does that sound like? You've gathered in your regular meeting place, as follows: George E. Macomber, W. G. Boothby, W. H. Gannett, elected by common holders of preferred stock; and six holders of common stock. The common stock has been reduced by $25,000 to $12,450.

Aside from the four Masonic bodies, the Club's annual meeting was one of its annual meetings that was held by 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. The Masonic Club elected a new president of the Club on May 16, 1894, and addressed to H. E. Nash, the Indian name of Cushnoc was abandoned. The Club was incorporated in the By-Laws as a quasimasonic organization, with its address at the south, or blind, side of the Temple.

With the exception of Governor Plaisted, who is an active member, the club does not discriminate. The Club has been 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 Mansion's Council, in legislative sessions, and on those occasions the House of the Club has been sent them at the commencement of each legislative session.

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The club is gathering any moss as it grows older. On the contrary, it's rolling up peep. We are going past the time when it was the object of the club to have a service flag placed at the front of the club rooms having on it a star for each member that enlisted thereafter.

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

We have both demonstrated and professed 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—which to city water in the spring.”

The record does not show whose tank, but some of our charter members were present.

Although the Abnak Club is a purely Masonic organization, with its acreage being 1,900 acres, it has been in a way a public institution. With the exception of Governor Plaisted, who is an active member, the club does not discriminate. The Club has been 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 sessions, and on those occasions the House of the Club has been sent them at the commencement of each legislative session. It is not possible to discuss all the cases of honorary members.

I mention these things only in passing, for the essential and vital feature of Club life is that which makes it delightful, the thing which makes us all love it, and the thing which we would most like to see continued—its usefulness, its spirit of absolute democracy and equality. It is typical 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, 1895, there is no money left over to use.

“The 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.”

“The motion by S. C. Webster it was that a card be placed on the door of the club rooms making welcome to the members who had served in the army and navy during the continuance of the war.”

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century—methods he has employed—
when I gaze about me and And that our
club rooms have had a Turkish bath,
and when I realize that everything
about the club is so sweet andве
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 some-
times a man is so depressed and weary
that he doesn't want to talk. Very
well, De 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 lit-
tle egg-shell, there comes a time when
the egg becomes—well, let us say notice-
ably affected by the natural process of
decay. Then there are the card, bill-
iard, pool, checker and chess tourna-
ments 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 pleas-
ure. 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 en-
trenched to be either suppressed or sup-
planted. 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 intrigues, 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 prin-
ciple 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 in the rest of the finest ele-
ments of a city and county that are fine
enough for the finest man to live in.