

MOUNTAIN LODGE, No. 11

By Bro. C. H. Parson, with historical notes by Bro. J. H. Griffith.

During the construction of the C.P.R. west of the summit of the Rockies, during the years 1884 and 1885, it was first intended to locate the divisional point at the junction of the Kicking Horse River and the Columbia. This caused a "tent town" to spring up at that point during the summer of 1884, before the railroad reached there. This settlement was then known as "Golden City", going one better than the dethroned "Silver City" at the summit of the Rockies.

Upon investigation, it was found, that owing to the low level of the land along the river, it was subject to flood by reason of ice jams in winter; and, therefore, the cost of building a foundation for a divisional point would necessitate large expense. Consequently, it was decided to establish it at the first crossing of the Columbia River, about 16 miles west, and this location was christened "Donald" after Donald A. Smith, later Lord Strathcona.

Here James Ross, manager of construction, had his headquarters during the latter part of 1884-85. Donald was purely a railroad town, and, as usually happened in the days of mountain construction in the United States, the divisional points were somewhat wild and woolly, owing to the amount of work required, and made it necessary to employ a larger number of men to the mile than on the prairies, and the work continued for a much longer period.

There were over a dozen saloons in the town, and a music hall with a crowd of girls who had been brought from England to entertain the ever moving crowd.

The construction of the railway was concluded in November, 1885, and by this time, Donald had settled down more or less, but it again became active in 1886-7 during the construction of the snow sheds on the railway. However at no stage of construction did the bad element get any great control, because the enforcement of the law was in the hands of the North West Mounted Police under the command of Inspector Steele, later General Sam Steele. The force was tolerant up to a certain point, but when a red coat with a business-like revolver came in view, and, backed by the Dominion Government, gave orders, it was invariably obeyed, and, failing this the culprit would be locked up. Considering the number of men of different nationalities to be controlled, it is remarkable how seldom serious crimes occurred.

One occasion only, was the force really tested. This happened when the end of track was at Beavermouth, 12 miles west of Donald, in the winter of 1884-5. Some of the Donaldites were following the crowd, and the railway company at the time was so hard pressed financially that payment to Contractors was in arrears. This resulted in a strike of a large number of men in the vicinity and they congregated at Beavermouth. The Police Camp was on the other side of Beaver River, connected with Beavermouth by a bridge.

The force then at the Camp consisted of Inspector Steele, Sergeant Fury, and about six or seven constables. While patrolling among the strikers, Sergeant Fury and a constable came

in contact with a sub-contractor named Behan, who was apparently inciting the men to resist the police, and Sergeant Fury promptly arrested him. While taking his prisoner to the Police Camp, the crowd tried to force his release; Sergeant Fury immediately shot the man who made the attempt and was then able to go on. In the meantime, Inspector Steele and all the other constables had arrived at the Camp end of the bridge, with Winchester rifles, kneeling ready to fire. The Inspector sang out that the first man who stepped on the bridge would be killed, and while there was a lot of encouragement from the men behind, those in front did not, under the circumstances, show any interest in attempting to visit the opposite side of the river, and eventually took the back track. The Mounties got their man, and peace ensued.

Donald was only a village of probably three hundred people so far as the permanent residents were concerned, but there were always many floaters. The land in the vicinity was of little value of agricultural purposes, so that the few merchants in the town had to depend entirely on the resident railway employees for business. In 1897, operating conditions changed, and the divisional point was moved to Revelstoke. This was the end of Donald, and, in 1900, all the residents left the town, the railroad men going to Revelstoke and most of the others to a new town, Golden, which had come into being, on a beautiful townsite some twenty miles south. To this point the Court House was taken, the Episcopal Church still further to Windermere and the other building privately owned, to different points at the Railway's expense. Nothing but a memory remains of the town of Donald.

A dispensation to form a Lodge at Donald, B. C., was issued by Grand Master Wm. Dalby, October 9, 1886. The charter was issued by Grand Master A. R. Milne. The Lodge was instituted on February 14, 1887, by W. Bro. D. W. H. Horlock, T. Clark, W.M., and Bro. W. H. Smith, of Kamloops Lodge, No. 10, together with Rev. A. H. Cameron, P.M., Belmont Lodge, No. 13, G. C., Manitoba, and other visiting Brethren, who installed the following principal Officers, viz., F . L. Newman, W. M.; J. A. Sweat, S. W.; Thos. Downie, J. W.; and A. G. M. Spragge, Secretary.

The Chartered Members were—10 :

F . L. Newman
J. A. Sweat
Thos. Downie
John Hamilton
Lacy R. Johnston
A. G. M. Spragge
E . J. Russell
D. Ferguson
D. Carmichael
R. Marpole

The original warrant is still held by the Lodge.

The old minutes state that "The Worshipful Master and Officers were, by permission of the M. W. Grand Master of British Columbia, provisionally installed under dispensation by Wor. Bro. D. W. H. Horlock, Past Master of Kamloops Lodge, No. 13, and Past Provincial

Grand Senior Warden, of Cornwall, England, awaiting a warrant to issue from the Grand Lodge of British Columbia, to render that installation effective.”

The records of the Lodge under dispensation were ratified and confirmed by Rt. Wor. Bro. Sibree Clark, as Special Deputy for the Grand Master, who constituted the Lodge, dedicated the Lodge Room, and installed the Officers on December 5, 1887. At the time No. 11 was formed, Donald was a divisional point of the C.P.R and quite a little city.

The members were mostly C. P. R. employees in one way or another, and it maintained this class of membership largely until 1900, when it was moved to Golden

W. Bro. Thos. Downie, our first Junior Warden, was the brother of M. W. G. M. William Downie, the general superintendent of the C. P. R. Company at Vancouver. Unlike his brother T. D was a peppery little cuss ; he was killed by a snow slide near Albert Canyon, April 11, 1904, while on duty. He was our last surviving charter member. The first members to be initiated were William Matheson, carpenter, and Thos. Miller, builder—note the appropriateness of their occupations—which they probably turned at once to the Lodge's advantage, as all our desks and the Altar—still in use—were hand made by the enthusiastic Brethren of those early struggling days.

Bro. R Marpole, General Superintendent of the C. P. R, Vancouver, was one of our earliest members, also Bro. F. E. Hobbs, now Superintendent Motive Power, C. P. R, Montreal. Bro. J. E. Griffiths was initiated in 1887; he is the present Deputy Minister of Railways for the Province. He, with Bro. George Risteen, were the men who reported on the Trans Andean snow sheds for the South American Government. Bro. Griffiths helped to supervise the building of the original snow sheds for the C. P. R, and, like “Johnnie Walker”, is still going strong—more power to you, old timer. The Lodge prospered at Donald, its Brethren were most enthusiastic, but always kept within due bounds. Bro. W. H. Elson now of the B. C. Electric, and Bro. Jack Hopgood, Assistant Superintendent C. P. R., Vancouver, (now retired) were also early initiates. Three of our Brethren were M. P. P.'s, vis., Bros. W. G. Neilson, H. G. Parson and J. A. Buckham.

When, in 1898-99, the C. P. R decided to remove the divisional point from Donald to Revelstoke, the decision spelt the demise of No. 11, as a resident of its birthplace—Donald—as nearly all its members were transferred to Revelstoke. These members were also anxious to transfer the Lodge to Revelstoke, naturally enough, as was also Kootenay Lodge, No. 15, They desired to amalgamate it with No. 11, and so obtain our lower number, for though Mountain Lodge carries its number as No. 11, it is really No. 8 in the actual number of Lodges on the register of Grand Lodge .

The minutes of the regular meeting, December 11, 1899, show, that after a lively discussion, it was moved that the regular meetings of No. 11 be held in the Masonic Temple, Revelstoke, instead of Donald, B. C. This motion was lost. Notice of motion was then given that “Article 1, of the By-laws be amended by striking out the word Donald in the 2nd line thereof, and substituting the word Golden therefor.” W. Bro. J. C. Pitts, now of Columbia Lodge, No. 38, states that he moved, and I, the writer, seconded this motion .

At the next regular meeting, December 27, 1899, this motion was carried, but thereby hangs a tale. Some of the Golden Brethren, fearful as to whether this motion would carry or not, enlisted the fraternal help and sympathy of W. Bro. Killeen, of Banff Lodge, the assistant roadmaster for the C. P. R, at Field, who happened to be in Golden that afternoon, with the result that they obtained the loan of a handcar—old fashioned pump style—and three or four energetic Brethren hand pumped to Donald, twenty miles, and walked into Lodge just in time to decide the notice of motion in Golden's favour. It should be borne in mind that none of the Brethren had ridden a handcar before; that it was 12 degrees below zero going, and over 20 degrees below coming back, so that it was compulsory to pump to keep from freezing. The distance was travelled in a little over an hour. What would have happened had they met a train, deponent does not say, but the deponent does say that on their arrival at Golden, they made for the nearest hot rum or scotch, "with a lemon in it." Permission was granted by M. W. Grand Master R. Eden Walker, on January 11, 1900, to move the Lodge from Donald to Golden. The minute books of the Lodge are intact from its institution.

Once the Lodge was opened in Golden, March 12, 1900, it was kept busy, and material of the right kind was abundant. We were working all hours of the night and morning. Some of the Brethren realized that we were working in a most unsuitable room, and also, that the 4th degree was "eating" into our funds. At the regular meeting, November 11, 1901, a committee of W. Bros. Warren, Devlin, Stalker and Bro. C. H. Parson, secretary, was appointed to devise means for the foundation of a trust fund to be used for the charitable purposes of the Lodge; it being understood that did the fund grow sufficiently, it should be used for the purpose of providing a suitable Lodge Room. At this time we were working in what was known as the Alexander Hall, over Bro. H. G. Parson's store. In the meantime, the funds were to be available for charitable purposes only. One result of this committee's work is seen in the Charity By Law of this Lodge, a by-law which has earned the approval of all the Grand Masters; several expressing the wish that it was included in the By-laws of every Lodge in the Jurisdiction. As an evidence of how this fund was gradually built up, let me quote from the minutes of February 10, 1902 : "That the thanks of the Lodge be conveyed to Bro. J. F. Hanna for supplying the refreshments to the Lodge, and that the usual amount expended for that purpose be devoted to the charity fund." In 1903, the Lodge moved its place of meeting from the Alexander Hall, to the hall in the building purchased by the I.O.O.F. Lodge here. This hall, while an improvement on the old place of meeting, was lacking in Masonic requirements. It is still in use by us today, both Lodges meet in the same hall, ante rooms are inadequate, and it has been criticized by visiting Grand lodge Officers, but, as the only hall available we have made the best of it. In 1914, our members responded nobly to the Call of Empire, nearly one-third of our then membership took up the Torch and bore it from France to Mesopotamia, and some paid the inevitable price. In more recent years the Lodge has pursued the even tenor of its way, always setting a high standard, both for its applicants and ritualistic work, also to the community in which it lives. Several of our Brethren have held Grand Lodge offices; during the Lodge's existence in Donald it provided Grand Lodge with two Grand Masters—Lacy R. Johnston and Sibree Clark (Honorary Member), also three D.D.G.M.s—Thos. Downie, A. G. M. Spragge, and W. G. Ruttan. Since moving to Golden, W. Bros. J. N. Taylor, R. W. Devlin, Geo. E. Sanborn and W. J. McRae have been District Deputy Masters. W. Bro. W. J. McRae has held the office of Grand Sword

Bearer. W. Brother R. J. Sutherland was Grand Steward. Last year as a Lodge, we suffered a severe loss by the untimely death of Bro. J. A. Buckham, at one time Speaker in the Provincial House. He was beloved by all, and his counsel and ready practical help was available to everyone, Masons or profane—we miss him. Now in 1932, we are beginning to appreciate the foresight and constructiveness of, shall I say “Our Ancient Brethren”, who in 1901, 31 years ago, put into our By-laws that charity fund section which is enabling us today to erect a Masonic Temple for our home. This is being built under architect’s plans, and with the approval and approbation of our Grand Master. We hope to make it as perfect in all its parts as we can; for be it known, that we have accumulated, without depreciating in any way, that greatest of all Masonic virtues, I mean charity, sufficient funds to pay for a building which we feel sure will be a benefit to our Craft and to the community in which we dwell, and will also be a tangible proof of the faith we have in our little town and district. This building is being erected at a cost of \$6,900.00.

Now, after the past two years of depression and pessimism, which was world wide, things are beginning to wear a brighter aspect. What with the Lausanne Agreement, the Ottawa Conference, and the undoubted promise of good crops, and optimistic feeling is spreading rapidly, and we shall soon resume our upward and onward march. Do not overlook the fact, Brethren, that through it all, our Dominion has been in the forefront with its stable institutions and its faith in the Great Architect of the Universe. Mountain Lodge, No. 11, with a membership of 108 Brethren, as per last Grand Lodge report, stands 100 per cent on the Benevolent Fund list.

Fraternally yours,

C. H. PARSON,

M. M., A. L. 5899.

Golden, B. C.,

August 12th, 1932.

NOTE BY GRAND HISTORIAN

Since the above article was written by Bro. C. H. Parson, the corner stone of the new Masonic Temple at Golden, B. C., was laid on August 20, 1932, by M. W. Bro. J. E. Beck, Grand Master, and the Temple was formally opened for use on December 12, 1932.

Mountain Lodge, No. 11, is to be congratulated not only on having such a splendid home, but also on the fact that the edifice as now completed is free from debt.

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