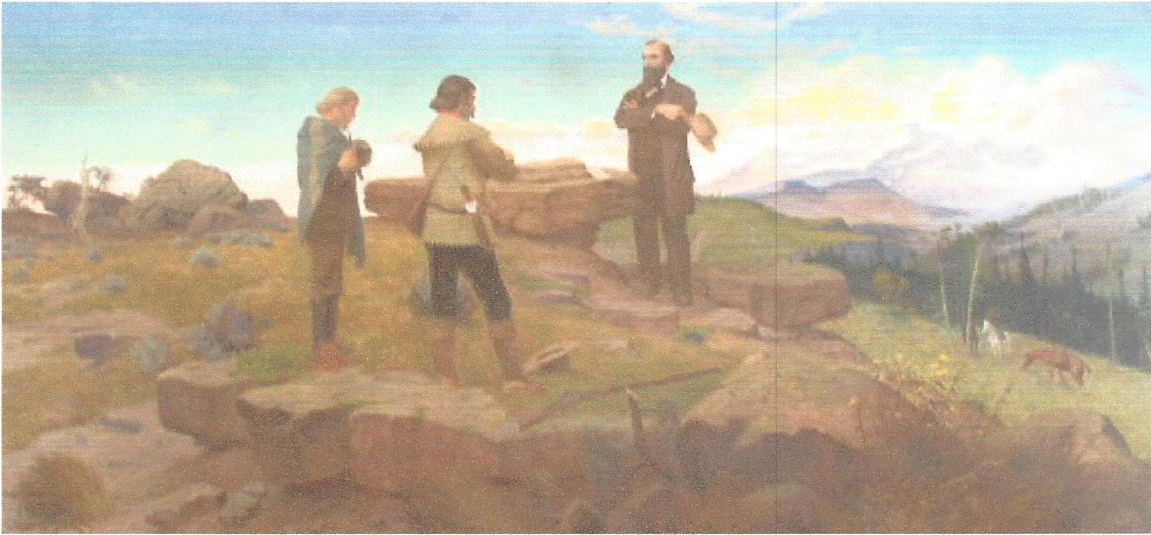


MULLAN PASS HISTORIC LODGE No. 1862



First Meeting of Masons in Montana

The beginning of Masonry in Montana provides some of the most colorful pages in all the history of the craft. Its highlights included significant events which influenced and supported the establishment of civil government in the Territory and later the State of Montana.

The first of these events was the first meeting of Masons in Montana on September 23, 1862, when three brethren with the first Fisk expedition, then camped on the Mullan road at the summit of the Rockies, went through the ritual of opening and closing a lodge. They were Nathaniel P. Langford, David Charlton and George Gere, all members of Minnesota lodges.

The record of this first meeting of Masons in Montana is recorded in the Grand Lodge Proceedings of 1867 and was recounted by Nathaniel P. Langford, Grand Historian (and later Grand Master).

I esteem myself fortunate in having been one of the early settlers of Montana---more fortunate in having, before I left the abodes of civilization, been raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason. When the company, of which I was one, entered what is now Montana---then Dakota---a single settlement, known by the name of Grasshopper (now Bannack), was the only abode of the white man in the southern part of the Territory. Our journey from Minnesota, of fourteen hundred miles, by a route never before traveled, and with the slow conveyance of ox trains, was of long duration, and tedious. It was a clear September twilight when we camped on the western side of the range of the Rocky Mountains, where it is crossed by the Mullan road. The labors of the day over, three of our number---a brother named Charlton, another whose name I have forgotten, and myself---the only three Master Masons in the company, impressed with the grandeur of the mountain scenery and the mild beauty of the evening, ascended the mountain to its summit, and there, in imitation of our ancient brethren, opened and closed an informal Lodge of Master Masons. I had listened to the solemn ritual of Masonry a hundred times, but never when it impressed me so seriously as upon this occasion; such also was the experience of my companions. Our long journey, and its undeviating round of daily employments, had, until this occasion, been wholly unalleviated by any circumstance calculated to

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soften or mellow the feelings subjected to such discipline. We felt it a relief to know each other in the light of Masonry. Never was the fraternal clasp more cordial than when in the glory of that beautiful autumnal evening, we opened and closed the first Lodge ever assembled in Montana.

Contemplating this early incident in the history of our Order, from our present stand-point, and including in the contemplation what Masonry has since done for the Territory, and the Territory for Masonry, it seems to have been invested with a kind of prophetic interest; especially as at that time it could hardly have been possible for the few Masons in the Territory to have known each other, except as mere adventurers. As a manifestation of the all-pervading affections of Masons for the Lodge, it is worthy of enduring record in our archives. It is one of those facts that will reach forward into our history, and seize upon those undying elements which shall transmit it to posterity. The fact will render the spot sacred---and once known among Masons, it will never be forgotten, that the first Lodge in the Territory was opened and closed upon the summit of the Rocky Mountains.

I might dilate upon the beauty of the evening upon which we met; the calm radiance of the moon and stars; the grandeur of the surrounding scenery. We exchanged fraternal greetings, spoke kind words one to another, and gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of that elevation of spirit which Masonry, under such circumstances, alone could evoke; and when we left the summit of that glorious range of mountains, to descend to our camp, each felt that he had been made better and happier for this confidential interchange of Masonic sentiment.



In the minutes of Helena Lodge No.3 from July 25th, 1940 show that “a Lodge of Master Masons was opened at 8:00 P.M. on a spot near the site of the First known meeting of Masons in what is now Montana, on Mullan Pass west of Helena...”

The minutes of Helena Lodge No. 3 from September 3, 1954 show that “It was the consensus of the Brothers present that the meeting should become an Annual Affair and a permanent site secured on Mullan Pass if Possible”.

The minutes of Helena Lodge No.3 from July 15, 1955 show that “a marker was being completed, consisting of an oblong monument built of fieldstone and mortar some two feet wide, three
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