

Death and Masonic Funerals in Territorial Idaho and Montana

Daniel Gardiner

DURING THE GOLD RUSH ERA IN WHAT WERE THE THEN EXPANSIONIST territories of Idaho and Montana, the American Civil War was waged ‘back in the States.’¹ Thousands would flock to camps where previously there might be migratory settlements of native people, or none at all. ‘Firsts’ in gold mining camps became imbued with significance. The first ‘institutions’ of any kind usually came after the influx of inhabitants had been settled there for some time. In many cases, these institutions were born of a first sobering experience: the funerals for ‘natural’ deaths. Freemasonry on the American Frontier stabilized mining communities through funeral ceremonies, and by introducing the comfort of institutional or perceived cultural norms.

The ‘Good Death’ in the Victorian Era

According to Drew Gilpin Faust in *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, ‘Death’s significance for the Civil War generation arose from its violation of prevailing assumptions about life’s proper end – about who should die, when and where, and under what circumstances,’ and ‘Civil War soldiers and civilians alike distinguished what many referred to as “ordinary death,” as it had occurred in prewar years, from the

¹ NB: The phrase, ‘back in the States’, refers to being within the established borders of the United States.



Fig. 1. A Good Death: Magic Lantern slide. This slide depicts a stereotypical 'Good Death.' The image was acquired from Bro. Everett Lynn, member of Helena Lodge No. 3, Grand Lodge of Montana. However, a similar or identical slide has been witnessed by the writer of this paper in Idaho Lodge No. 1, Grand Lodge of Idaho, and other Boise area lodges. It is a late addition to Masonic lectures, which are given following degrees, and are often accompanied by painted carpets, lithographed prints, or slides projected onto a wall. The image does not fit in with the rest of the curated slides, either in artistic style or with the rehearsed lectures; it is a curious anomaly occasionally inserted nonetheless. This deathbed scene represented the ideal end of life scenario in Victorian era America. Picture: Daniel Gardiner

manner and frequency of death in Civil War battlefields, hospitals, and camps, and from the war's interruptions of civilian lives.²

The communal American experience with death was turned on its head as bodies were destroyed. Corpses were not always memorialized, nor properly buried – nor whole. Faust explains the dissociation between bodies and lost limbs and the 'integral relationship between the body and the human self it housed' as being shattered, challenging '[t]he traditional notion that corporeal resurrection and restoration would accompany the Day of Judgement.'³ Disposition of the remains, appropriate ceremonial marking of the occasion, and care for the remaining family were on the minds of frontiersmen, as well.

For people travelling to the 'wild West,' death was a dominating cultural presence:

The concept of the Good Death was central to mid-nineteenth-century America, as it had long been at the core of Christian practice. Dying was an art, and the tradition of *ars moriendi* had provided rules of conduct for the moribund and their attendants since at least the fifteenth century ...⁴

So diverse and numerous were these representations of the Good Death that they reached a wide spectrum of the American population at midcentury, and they would become a central theme within the songs, stories, and poetry of the Civil War itself. By the 1860s many elements of the Good Death had been to a considerable degree separated from their explicitly theological roots and had become as much a part of respectable middle-class behavior and expectation in North and South as they were the product or emblem of any particular religious affiliation. ...[T]hey had spread beyond formal religion to become a part of a more general system of belief held across the nation about life's meaning and life's appropriate end.

The Good Death proved to be a concern shared by almost all Americans of every religious background. ...The war encouraged a Protestant ecumenism that yielded interdenominational publication societies, common evangelical gatherings, and shared charitable efforts ...⁵

A miner or merchant or other frontiersman on the trail out West, or in a Western gold camp was overwhelmingly a man. Whether or not he had a family of his own 'back in the States,' he was often traveling 'singly.' Because he might die thus alone, and far from home, observing the rites of the *ars moriendi* and Good Death was even more difficult:

... How one died thus epitomized a life already led and predicated the quality of life everlasting. The *hora mori*, the hour of death, had therefore to be witnessed, scrutinized, interpreted, narrated – not to mention carefully prepared for by any sinner who sought to be worthy of salvation.

² D. G. Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), xii-xiii.

³ Faust, *This Republic*, xvi.

⁴ Faust, *This Republic*, 6.

⁵ Faust, *This Republic*, 7.

... Perhaps the most distressing aspect of death for many Civil War Americans was that thousands of young men were dying away from home ... Death customs of the Victorian era centered on domestic scenes and spaces; hospitals housed the indigent, not respectable citizens. As late as the first decade of the twentieth century, fewer than 15 percent of Americans died away from home.

Family was central to the *ars moriendi* tradition, for kin performed its essential rituals. Victorian ideals of domesticity further reinforced these assumptions about death's appropriate familial setting. One should die among family assembled around the deathbed ... Kin would use their observations of the deathbed to evaluate the family's chances for a reunion in heaven. A life was a narrative that could only be incomplete without this final chapter, without the life-defining last words.⁶

A popular subject for paintings and engravings was the family gathered around the deathbed of their beloved. These artificially depicted Good Deaths were so ubiquitous – and so intertwined for some Masons – that sometimes they were interwoven into Masonic lectures given in the third or Master Mason Degree. Even today in some Idaho and Montana lodges there can be found some slides copied from nineteenth century 'magic lanterns' showing a family death bed scene. The slide is not represented in the same art styles as the others in the series, nor does it directly relate to the rehearsed words in the appropriate lecture. The 'Good Death' slide seems ill-fitting today because it does not correspond to any specific parts of the written lecture; and yet, to the Mason in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it seemed so natural that no explanation was apparently necessary!

1877: William Dowdle's Death at Rock Creek Station, Idaho

An 1864 letter quoted in Faust demonstrates the sort of upheaval 'back in the States' that frontiersmen sometimes hoped to escape: "There was a man this moment shot in the belly 20 feet from me which is nothing unusual in this country. It is worth a man's life to go to sh–t here." To shoot a man as he defecated, or slept, or sat cooking or eating ... could not easily be rationalized as an act of self defence.⁷

The traditional concept of the Good Death and funeral services could be inescapable out West, as well. Miners and freighters might reinvent themselves, taking new names and identities, or return 'home' with a different persona or new families. A man might die away from home through disease, accident, or murder. Perhaps worst of all, this new 'inability to witness the last moments of a brother, husband, or child shattered expectations about an appropriate earthly conclusion to these important human connections.'⁸

⁶ Faust, *This Republic*, 9–10.

⁷ Faust, *This Republic*, 42.

⁸ Faust, *This Republic*, 13–14.



Fig. 2. Rock Creek Stage Station. The three adult figures standing on the step together are Herman Stricker, who had recently taken over the station operation, Mr Knight in the centre (flanked by two small Stricker children), and Bill Trotter (in the door frame). Trotter was the object of Dowdle's revenge. The low sod-roofed building behind the horses is the station. Picture: Idaho State Historical Society, No. 80-13-6

In his *Vigilante Days and Ways*, Nathaniel Pitt Langford notes that 'My diary for 1877 shows that on September 17th I passed through Rock Creek by stage en route for Boise.'⁹ In this 1877 sketch, Langford and an English travelling partner arrived at a stagecoach stopping-station in Idaho Territory in time to witness a funeral procession for a William Dowdle. This funeral was the reverse of epitomizing the Good Death, it was a 'Bad Death'.

William Dowdle had served two years at the Idaho Penitentiary. Upon his release, he sought to settle a grudge against a Mr William Trotter, who was the proprietor of the stagecoach station at which Langford and his English travelling companion arrived. Their testimony had secured Dowdle's imprisonment in Boise for horse thievery.

Finding Trotter 'confined to his bed with typhoid fever', and still looking for someone to take out his frustrations on, Dowdle sat beside the road, and 'fired indiscrimi-

⁹ N. P. Langford, *Vigilante Days and Ways* (Helena, Montana: American & World Geographic Publishing, 1996), 338.

nately at all who passed him.' One of his shots hit a blacksmith 'passing quietly along.'¹⁰ Trotter's brother-in-law, Charles Walgamott, who was assisting in managing the property (by then operated by Herman Stricker), returned fire and shot Dowdle through the heart, killing him. Thereafter:

The funeral followed speedily. A rude coffin of pine, with four handles of cords knotted into the sides, was the single preparation. In this the body, encased in Johnson's overcoat, was laid, fully exposed, the cover of the box being laid aside until the conclusion of the ceremonies. Four strong men grasped the handles, and lifting the coffin, the procession formed about equally in front and rear of them, and the march commenced. Frequent potations had exhilarated the entire company to such a degree that no attempt was made to preserve regularity of motion or direction. The line of march was between a ride on the south and one on the north side of the station, about a mile apart. No clergyman was present to conduct the exercises, and no layman was in a condition to offer a prayer or read the scriptures. The exigency could only be supplied by vocal music, and in the absence of hymn books it was thought to be exceedingly proper and befitting the occasion for all to join in an old California refrain entitled, 'The Days of Forty-Nine.'¹¹

Langford continues the story:

Mrs. Trotter informed me that this procession of men bearing the coffin, had marched to and fro between the two ridges in a state of drunken revelry for a period of five hours; some singing one, some another verse, producing an utter confusion of sound, and so excited as to be utterly unable to preserve a straight line. At one of their halts near the coach, Johnson [a freighter for whom Dowdle was employed for as a cook], who was at the moment one of the bearers, discovered that his own overcoat covered the body.

"[expletive deleted] if they haven't laid him out in my blue overcoat!" he exclaimed, and loosening his hold of the handle, he raised the body, removed the coat, and put it on his own back. The march was then resumed, and amid singing, shouts, and laughter, the body was borne on a low ridge and buried.

Supper being soon announced, my English fellow-traveller did not appear at the table. He was perfectly appalled at the scene he had witnessed.

'Is this,' he inquired, with much earnestness, 'the usual way funerals are conducted in this wild country? We never have such proceedings in England, you know. If the better class of people do such things, the country must be pretty rough. I didn't know but they'd take me next, and I hadn't any appetite.'

I assured him that our lives were perfectly safe; but it was not until we had reached the next eating station, that hunger seemed to conquer his fears, and he was fully reassured.¹² [emphasis added]

¹⁰ Langford, *Vigilante*, 339.

¹¹ Langford, *Vigilante*, 339.

¹² Langford, *Vigilante*, 340.

Dowdle's funeral procession, such as it was – and the un-named English visitor's horror at witnessing it – was exactly the sort of spectacle that many itinerant Western travelers hoped to avoid.

The 'single preparation' for the funeral was a simple coffin: 'No clergyman was present to conduct the exercises, and no layman was in a condition to offer a prayer or read the scriptures.' Lacking even in solemn hymns to sing to the dead and for the comfort of the living, the men resorted to a well-known-to-them tune (in Langford's words, 'a doggerel') commemorating the California gold rush of 1849 – simply replacing Dowdle's name for another character's in the song. The pallbearers were so inebriated that they jostled one another and surely dislodged the corpse as well, exposed as it was without the lid attached. In fact, Dowdle's employer had violated the 'single preparation' by reaching into the coffin to retrieve his own jacket from the corpse. Without any clear destination such as a church or other civic center, the men staggered around without purpose until they finally concluded they'd done enough ambulating to serve the deed.

As a Mason with much experience in the solemnities exercised by his fraternity on funereal occasions, Langford's inclusion of the English visitor's shock serves as a foil for an earlier, well-known funeral occasion, over which Langford himself presided.

1862: William H. Bell's death in Bannack, Montana

N. P. Langford (a Minnesota Mason, who for a time settled in what is now Montana and became a Grand Master of the fraternity) tells of a funeral in the Grasshopper Creek gold diggings, and their camp at Bannack, which was a name ascribed to many geographical locations, particularly those found desirable for mining:

... All these newly discovered placers [in Grasshopper Creek, now in present-day Montana] were, however, known by the general name of East Bannack, the prefix being used to distinguish the locality from West Bannack, a mining camp in that portion of Idaho lying west of the Rocky Mountains.¹³

The 'other' Bannack was later re-named Idaho City, and the town still exists, in present-day Idaho (although it is spelled Bannock, with an 'o'). A similar Masonic funeral that took place about the same time near this 'West' Bannock will be discussed later in this paper. Langford sets the scene for the "East" Bannack (in Washington Territory, and then re-districted into Idaho Territory, and later in Montana) during the American Civil War:

... Life in Bannack at this time was perfect isolation from the rest of the world. Napoleon was not more of an exile on St. Helena, than the newly arrived immigrant from the States, in this recess of rocks and mountains. All the stirring battles of the season of 1862, – Antietam, Fredricksburg and Second Bull Run, – all the exciting debates of

¹³ Langford, *Vigilante*, 114.



Fig. 3. A headstone for William H. Bell in Bannack, Montana. Some time perhaps c.2000 a replacement headstone of granite was placed over the location of Bell's grave. However, according to the father of the author of this paper (Reid Gardiner, Past Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Montana), the clean lines and unweathered look was not sufficiently rustic in appearance for Bannack State Park tourism. This crude marker can be seen there today. Bell was the first 'natural' death in Bannack, and received a Masonic funeral. The first church was not built in Bannack until 1874 – twelve years after Bell's death.

Picture: Daniel Gardiner

Congress, and the more exciting combats at sea, first became known to us on arrival of the first newspapers and letters, in the spring of 1863. Old newspapers went the rounds of the camp until they literally dropped to pieces. Pamphlets, cheap publications, and yellow-covered literature, which had found their way by chance into the camp, were in constant and unceasing demand. *Bibles, of which there were a few copies, were read by men who probably never read them before, to while away the tedium of the dreary days of winter. Of other books, there were none then, or for a year or more afterwards.*¹⁴ [emphasis added]

Migrants to the 'gold country' commonly felt that their lives were threatened. Institutions 'from the States' that were ubiquitous – such as churches and their Bibles – were noticeable in many tales by their absence. Their thoughts turned to what provisions might be undertaken to care for them after death (either naturally or hastened by human

¹⁴ Langford, *Vigilante*, 115.

hand). What institutions and ceremonies might be offered them? Langford remarked that, "The people were spellbound, and knew not what to do... and when a murder was committed, or a robbery made, expressed no stronger feeling than that of thankfulness for their own escape."

It was this melting pot of crime and accident – and mortality – that saw one Mason's November 12, 1862, passing bring the memorialization of the dead into focus:

While public sentiment was gradually settling down into a state of helpless submission to the ruffian element, William H. Bell, a respected citizen, died of mountain fever. This was the first natural death that had occurred in the settlement. After his illness had assumed a dangerous form, he made known to myself and others, that he was a Mason, and expressed a desire to be buried with Masonic ceremonies. At first we deemed it impossible, but after his death, concluded to comply with his request, if a sufficient number of Masons could be assembled to conduct the exercises. A request for all the Masons in the gulch to meet on Yankee Flat at the cabin of Brother C.J. Miller, on the evening of the day of Mr. Bell's death, greatly to our surprise, was so numerously responded to, that we found it necessary to adjourn to more commodious quarters. It was past midnight before the forms of recognition were fully administered, and preparations completed for the funeral. So delighted were all to meet so many of the order, that before we separated it was virtually understood that early application should be made for authority to open a lodge. In the meantime, we agreed to hold frequent meetings.¹⁵

We learn from the above extract that this sobering occasion caused the fraternal brothers to meet – and continue to meet. Death brought Masons together, where previously they had not made the effort to seek each other out in the camp. The account continued:

The funeral ceremonies, the next day, were conducted by myself. The strange peculiarities of the occasion added a mournful interest to the impressive truths of the ritual. A large congregation had assembled. Near by, and surrounding the grave, stood the little band of brethren, linked by an indissoluble bond to him for whom they were now performing the last sad office. With clasped hands and uncovered heads they reverently listened to the solemn language which in that faroff land committed one of their number to his mother earth; while farther away, and encircling them, stood a curious multitude, whose eager gaze betrayed that they there for the first time beheld a Masonic burial ceremony.¹⁶

It is clear from the preceding paragraph that Langford was well aware that the Masonic ceremonies had attracted the attention of non-Masons. Here was a funeral gathering for the first person to die of natural causes in the gold camp; here were gathered strangers, united through death. How might the 'profane' have looked upon the scene?

¹⁵ Langford, *Vigilante*, 112.

¹⁶ Langford, *Vigilante*, 112.

Among this latter number [of non-Masons] might be seen many whose daily lives were filled with deeds of violence and crime, – who mayhap at the moment might be meditating murder and robbery, – who, for the first time in many years, were listening to language which recalled the innocence of boyhood, the early teachings of parents, and hopefully pointed the way to an eternity of unmixed enjoyment. How strange it seemed to see this large assemblage, all armed with revolvers and bowie-knives, standing silently, respectfully, around the grave of a stranger, their very features, – distorted by the lines which their hardened lives had planted, – now saddened by a momentary fleeting thought of the grave and mortality.¹⁷

In Langford's characterization, Freemasonry's influence extended beyond the circle of men surrounding the grave. Onlookers witnessed the Masons pause to reflect upon death, and all the while they were themselves carrying emblems of mortality. He continued:

Nor was this all. They learned from what they saw, that here was an association, bound together by bonds of brotherly love, that would stand by and protect all its members in the hour of danger. They saw the scroll deposited which signified so plainly, that death alone could break a link in the mystic chain which bound them together. They saw each brother drop the evergreen as a symbol of the surrender of him they mourned, to the eternal care of a higher power. And while the brethren, as they regarded each other in the light of their strong obligations, felt that in themselves there was a power equal to the necessities of their exposed condition, we may reasonably suppose that the ruffians who had marked them for ultimate destruction felt that a new and formidable adversary had thrown itself across their bloody pathway.¹⁸

In this telling, the remaining citizens were able to witness a powerful unity through death. In this funeral setting, there were men who shared a connection with each other – a connection that the non-Masons did not share. They saw men who called themselves family – brothers – in a location with so few families. This fraternal brotherhood could see to it that each others' remains and record of life were properly showered with attention.

The Masons had also come to understand that they possessed a strength in numbers. Accordingly, they made plans to repulse the attack of the criminal element terrorizing the gold diggings up and down Grasshopper Creek (more especially at Bannack):

The ceremonies were conducted to a peaceful conclusion, and the assembled quietly dispersed. But from this time onward, the Masons met often for counsel. Among them there was no lack of confidence, and very soon they began to consider measures necessary for their protection. These meetings were carefully watched by the roughs, but they were quietly told that the Masons met to prepare for organizing a lodge. This threw them off their guard, and they continued their lawless course.¹⁹

¹⁷ Langford, *Vigilante*, 112–13.

¹⁸ Langford, *Vigilante*, 113.

¹⁹ Langford, *Vigilante*, 113.

To men such as Langford the fraternity was a stabilizing influence. It brought respectable proceedings to fledgling communities. It also brought into stark contrast the fate of those who were living together (and were yet without ties to each other), and those who had a Masonic 'condition of mutual dependence':

It is worthy of comment that every Mason in these trying hours adhered steadfastly to his principles. Neither poverty, persuasion, temptation, nor opportunity had the effect to shake a single faith founded on Masonic principle; and it is the crowning glory of our order, that not one of all that band of desperadoes who expiated a life of crime upon the scaffold, had ever crossed the threshold of a lodge-room. The irregularities of their lives, their love of crime, and their recklessness of law, originated in the evil associations and corrupt influences of a society over which neither Masonry nor Religion had ever exercised the least control. The retribution which finally overtook them had its origin in principles traceable to that stalwart morality which is ever the offspring of Masonic and Religious institutions. *All true men then lived upon the square, and in a condition of mutual dependence.*²⁰ [emphasis added]

Around this same time, near the 'West' Bannock referred to by Langford, another Masonic funeral brought together the Masons in the gold camp of Centerville. The Boise Basin camp of Centerville was about 10 miles from Idaho City on one side, and about 10 miles from Placerville, on the other, in Idaho Territory.

1863: William Slade's death in Centerville, Idaho

In his *Reminiscences of an Old Timer* an Oregon Mason named George Hunter, who travelled in 1849 from Ohio to the gold fields out West, related a story strikingly similar to Langford's account. In 1863, Hunter encountered one of his older brothers, who was mining near Placerville, in the Boise Basin (in present-day Idaho). Shortly thereafter, his brother had moved on. Hunter's sketch of another Mason's death and funeral here is worth quoting extensively:

Left alone among strangers, the spirit of wandering soon took hold of me again. Thinking to allay this mania, I concluded one morning to visit a neighboring town (Centerville) some ten miles distant [from Placerville in the Boise Basin]

On my arrival at Centerville, almost the first man I met was an old Masonic friend, named Owsley, a good physician, who had come to this camp some time before. On meeting and exchanging greetings, Owsley said, 'You are, above all others, the very man I am glad to meet just now.'

Thinking the doctor was probably 'short,' I put my hand to my pocket; seeing my move he said, 'No, George, not that! The facts are that a man has died in a cabin just out of town leaving a wife and three small children entirely destitute, and far from their home and friends.' He told me the man's name was Slade, and that he was from

²⁰ Langford, *Vigilante*, 113–14.



Fig. 4. Centerville Freight and Freightage. In the basin behind present-day Boise, Centerville, Idaho is situated between Placerville and Idaho City (previously known as Bannock or West Bannock). Both of the locations flanking Centerville (perhaps 10–15 miles from it on either side) started up Masonic lodges shortly after Slade's funeral, as did Boise, as: Idaho [City] No. 35, Boise No. 37, and Placer[ville] No. 38.

Now known as Idaho No. 1, Boise No. 2, and Placer No. 3, they continue to operate to this day in the Grand Lodge of Idaho. Picture: Idaho State Historical Society, #62–86–8

Yreka, California; that he had come into the camp a few weeks before, with a yoke of oxen and a light wagon, taking sick, he had sold the team and wagon, and consumed the proceeds in providing for his family while he was sick, finally dying, leaving the family destitute as before stated. That Slade had made himself known to him as a Master Mason, and had given him his Masonic pin, and the name and number of his Lodge, and requested him to do all in his power to assist the family; that he (Owsley) had attended Slade during his sickness.

'Now,' said the doctor, 'You are fertile in resources and a good worker, and you must help me out.' I said, 'Let us visit the cabin'; we did so, and I found the distressed family in a miner's cabin which was built of logs, the door was of split boards or shakes; in one corner was a fire-place and chimney of sticks and mud, posts had been driven into the ground, and on these had been made a platform of poles, over which was strewed fir boughs, making a regular miner's bunk. Lying on one of these bunks, with a few



Fig. 5. Burial of Slade in Boise Basin. In George Hunter's book this illustration shows the Masons gathered around William Slade's grave in Centerville, Idaho. They are giving 'funeral Grand Honors,' a now little-seen Masonic sign. This was customary in many Masonic funeral services. The coffin shows a Masonic device of square and compasses painted on it to the right of the widow and orphans.

Picture: public domain, *Reminiscences of an Old Timer*.

blankets under him, I saw what was left of Slade, while sitting around the fire were the sorrowing widow and children and Mrs. Dr. Owsley.

After taking a good look at the corpse, I said, 'Doctor there seems something familiar to me in that countenance, and if I had seen the man in health I should probably have known him.' As I said this I felt a hand laid lightly on my arm, and turning, I saw Mrs Slade standing beside me. 'Is not this George Hunter?' she asked; I answered 'Yes!' And she asked, 'Did you not know William Slade who used to edit the Yreka paper years ago?' I answered, 'Yes! and you were Miss Brown, of Jacksonville; quite a young girl, when I saw you last!' She said, 'Yes;' then pointing to her dead husband, said 'George, this and these dear children are all that is left me in this wide world, and God only knows what will become of them and me for I am entirely without means, even to bury my poor dead husband, much less to clothe and feed my children.' The tears streamed down her wan cheeks as she said this.

I took her hand and said: 'Mrs. Slade, do not distress yourself about financial affairs; you have sufficient to do to comfort these poor orphan children; leave the rest to the doctor and myself, and rest assured that all will be done for your husband that you could wish, and you and your children will be cared for. There are hundreds of big,

warm hearts near you, and when they are made aware of your troubles, they will sympathize with and assist you and yours to their utmost ability.'

She replied, 'The doctor has already assured me of these things; but I can only realize that I am left alone with these poor children and this my dead husband.'

Then, dropping on to her knees, and laying her weary head on the unthrobbed breast of him who had been her stay and support, she cried, 'Alone! Oh, God, all alone!'

Well, this was too much for me, an old timer. After wringing Mrs. Owsley's hand and kissing the babies, I hurriedly left the cabin, as I feared that if I remained longer I might 'slop over' myself. Owsley followed me. Nothing was said till we reached the upper end of Main street. Here we concluded to part, each taking a side of the street *in search of 'Brothers' belonging to our fraternity.*

I will try to describe my progress which, I presume, was duplicated by the doctor. The first house I visited was a large saloon, wherein were several 'moneyed' tables around which were many miners, packers and others, engaged in 'fighting the tiger' and similar games. It was 'chips for dust' and 'dust for chips' all around the hall. I approached the bar and ordered something, *at the same time – in my own way – inviting as many other fellows to join me as stood in need of refreshments, thus soon attracting the attention of many of those present.* Among them was Joe Oldham, a brother of the famed Sim Oldham, of California.

Joe was a tall, straight, fine-looking man – a sporting man by profession, and a saloonkeeper. He approached me with the others, and stepping aside asked me, if I wished to speak with them. I replied: 'Yes. Upon my arrival in this place an hour or so ago, I met Doctor Owsley, a Brother, who informed me that he had been attending professionally upon a Brother who had recently arrived from Yreka, and that the patient died during the previous night, leaving his widow and three small children destitute and friendless in a cabin near by. Now, the doctor and myself are looking for Brothers, and we hope those we find will seek for others, and meet us in some hall here, *where I will institute a Lodge of Instruction (or Investigation),* when we will proceed to give the deceased a decent interment, and provide for the widow and orphans.'

Oldham and myself then went to a store and ordered such things as were required for the immediate use of the family. Then we interested some sporting-women, who repaired to the cabin and sewed for the family, closing their houses till after the funeral. There were no other women near at this time, except Mrs. Owsley and the broken-down and grief-stricken widow.

For the rest of the day and night the hunt for Brothers went bravely on throughout the surrounding camps. There were no lodges in these camps as yet.

The next morning at ten o'clock a saloonkeeper stopped his business and gave us the use of his house to arrange matters in. *There we met, some eighty odd Brothers, dressed in woolen shirts and patched pants.*

After making the necessary examinations, we 'clothed' ourselves in white pocket handkerchiefs in lieu of the proper aprons, and repaired to the cabin. We had prepared as good a coffin as could be gotten up in such a place, and the family were dressed in appropriate mourning.

Forming in procession, we repaired to an adjacent mound and there gave our Brother the usual Masonic burial, with all of its rites, etc.

Then we returned to our improvised hall, placed a table in the centre [*sic*] of the room with gold scales, a blower and a purse on it, stating that *all Brothers had been made aware of the destitute circumstances of the widow and orphans*, and asked that all would perform their duty. We then formed in line and marched around the hall; as a Brother came up to the table he would select a weight and balance it with gold dust, put the dust in the purse and move on, giving place to another. Oldham marched immediately in front of me, and as he came to the table, he pulled out a purse of some hundreds of dollars; carefully untied it, then poured the contents into the blower, shook the purse and dropped it on the dust, turned and said as he shook my hand – the tears trickling off his long mustache, ‘Brother George, we can do something to atone for our cussedness, can’t we?’

This settled it; I did not take time to untie my purse; my eyes being rather dim at the time; I suppose caused by a bad cold that I had contracted a short time before. I just dropped what I had and passed on, as many others did. Suffice it to say, that on all being weighed, we found after paying all the expenses, we had a purse that we presented to the widow of nearly three thousand dollars. This purse, Owsley, Oldham, and myself were delegated to carry to the widow, which we did, and upon our presenting it to her she utterly refused to take it as she said it was too much to accept from strangers. But after we had explained that if she did not take and use the money for herself and children we would be forced to appoint guardians for the children, who would take and care for them and that which was donated to and for them, their use and benefit; our arguments prevailed and she accepted the generous aid, and within a few days started in the care of a Brother for her distant home and friends.

I tell this as another illustration of the generosity of old timers, and I have no idea that the same thing could be accomplished among any other class of men in any country, unless it would be for the benefit of the widow and orphans of some dead millionaire; and not then, unless it could be voted out of the public coffers that had been filled by the hard earnings of the working class. Soon after this, I returned to Placer-ville and my claim, more restless than ever. Sold out, bought two teams and started with ten or twelve passengers, for the Snake river diggings.²¹ [*italics added throughout for emphasis*]

Hunter continued to Salt Lake City where he was stricken by illness and spent time convalescing in a Mormon household. Then, ‘A short time after I had fully recovered I sold my teams, and engaged to carry the express to East Bannack and Virginia City, Montana,

²¹ G. Hunter, *Reminiscences of an Old Timer. A Recital of the Actual Events, Incidents, Trials, Hardships, Vicissitudes, Adventures, Perils, and Escapes of a Pioneer, Hunter, Miner and Scout of the Pacific Northwest Together with His later Experiences in Official and Business Capacities, and a Brief Description of the Resources, Beauties and Advantages of the New Northwest; the several Indian Wars, Anecdotes, Etc.* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker and Company, Stationers and Printers, 1887) 220–227

which I did in company with another man.’²² George Hunter traveled from Centerville to the same place where William Bell’s Masonic funeral had occurred a short time previously.

Slade’s funeral in Centerville managed to assemble eighty Masons. Bell’s funeral in Bannack is said by Langford, in his Address as the Grand Historian before the annual communication of the Grand Lodge of Montana in 1867, to have assembled seventy-six Masons, aside from Bell himself.²³ These are numbers to take notice of, even today in Idaho and Montana.

Slade’s funeral arrangements were ‘as good... as could be gotten up in such a place.’ Unlike Dowdle’s, funeral, Hunter and Oldham’s Masonic assembly gave Slade Masonic rites, while they dressed in handkerchiefs for regalia, rather than formal Masonic aprons. Slade’s death also sheds light on another important aspect of Masonic services available to their deceased Brothers: aid to the widows and orphans.

When Hunter informed Mrs. Slade that she should ‘not distress yourself about financial affairs; you have sufficient to do to comfort these poor orphan children; leave the rest to the doctor and myself, and rest assured that all will be done for your husband that you could wish, and you and your children will be cared for,’ he was making good on a Masonic obligation.

Care for a brother’s widow and orphans is a well-known, and long-standing, tradition among Freemasons: ‘Suffice it to say, that on all being weighed, we found after paying all the expenses [for the funeral], we had a purse that we presented to the widow of nearly three thousand dollars.’ This care for a wife (now a widow) and her children (now orphans) also met the expectations of a Good Death and the Victorian *ars moriendi* tradition.

Mrs. Slade was described as friendless and alone, and for whom there were, ‘...no other women near at this time, except Mrs. Owsley’ and the ‘sporting women,’ often sex workers (also known as ‘hurdy gurdy girls’ in dancing halls). The ability to have her husband buried, and her children and herself returned – safely escorted by a Masonic Brother – to her ‘distant home and friends’ must have been some relief. The amount that it could cost to bury someone in a manner that was expected in a Good Death will be seen in the next sketch for a Masonic funeral: Rodney Pococke’s in Helena, Montana.

For George Hunter, the event he describes (which began only one hour after his arrival in the gold camp!) left such an impression that he described the scene in great detail. Hunter and Slade’s brothers brought tears to the eyes of old-timers in meeting their funeral expectations.

²² Hunter, *Reminiscences*, 233.

²³ N.P. Langford, ‘Address,’ *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons of Montana, at its Third Communication, October 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, A.D. 1867: A.L. 5867* (Virginia City [Montana Territory], D.W. Tilton & Co., 1868), 13.

Additionally, a visual sketch of the burial of Slade is included in Hunter's *Reminiscences of an Old Timer*. The men are depicted in their 'woolen shirts and patched pants' and 'white pocket handkerchiefs in lieu of the proper aprons,' as Hunter related. The men are performing 'funeral grand honors.' The Mason presiding over the funeral has a Holy Bible, square and compasses resting upon a 'bible board' – a device that yokes a platform to rest in front of the chest of a person, which enables a Bible to rest in place. A sprig of acacia or evergreen is depicted at the head of the grave, near a spade or shovel. These are symbolic emblems that have long been depicted in connection with Masonic graves and funerals. The well-known Masonic emblems of the square and compasses are also painted on the side of the coffin; they are visible to the right of the widow and orphans.

The painted square and compasses emblem on the coffin is a detail also supposed to have been included in the printed bylaws of the nearby Idaho Lodge No. 35, then under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Oregon (now Idaho Lodge No. 1, under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Idaho). The 'funeral grand honors' referred to earlier are also called for in the service.²⁴ A modern Masonic ritual book from Idaho says: 'The Funeral Honors of Masonry are given thus: Cross the arms upon the breast, the left arm outermost, the hands being open and palms inward; then raise them above the head, the palms of the hands striking each other; and then let them fall sharply upon the thighs, the head being bowed. This is thrice done, and the action is accompanied with the following ejaculation – "The will of God is accomplished! So mote it be! – Amen!"'²⁵

1865: Rodney Pococke's death at Helena, Montana

A newspaper advertisement from Helena published in a Virginia City newspaper refers to Leander Rodney Pococke's²⁶ Masonic funeral of 7 March 1865.²⁷

Pococke's death signalled another way in which Masonic funerals were noticed by the struggling frontier communities: through newspaper notices. Pococke's funeral notice was prepared by Cornelius Hedges, an Iowa Mason who later became a Grand Master in Montana (following Nathaniel P. Langford, who presided at William Bell's funeral service in Bannack).

²⁴ *By-Laws of Idaho Lodge, No. 35, of Free and Accepted Masons, Held at Idaho City, Boise County, Being the Uniform Code Recommended, also, with a Service for Funerals, and a Funeral Dirge and Other Odes* (Portland: Albert G. Walling & Co., 1866), 2–3.

²⁵ Most Worshipful Grand Lodge Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Idaho, *The Idaho Monitor/Ohadi* (Boise, Idaho: Alexander Clark, 2004), 220.

²⁶ This brother went by the name of Rodney or L. Rodney Pococke, rather than his first name of Leander. Hedges always spells his last name without the 'e' on the end.

²⁷ 'Masonic Resolutions', *The Montana Post* (Virginia City: D. W. Tilton & Co., Vol. 1. No. 30. Sat. 18 March 1865), 2.

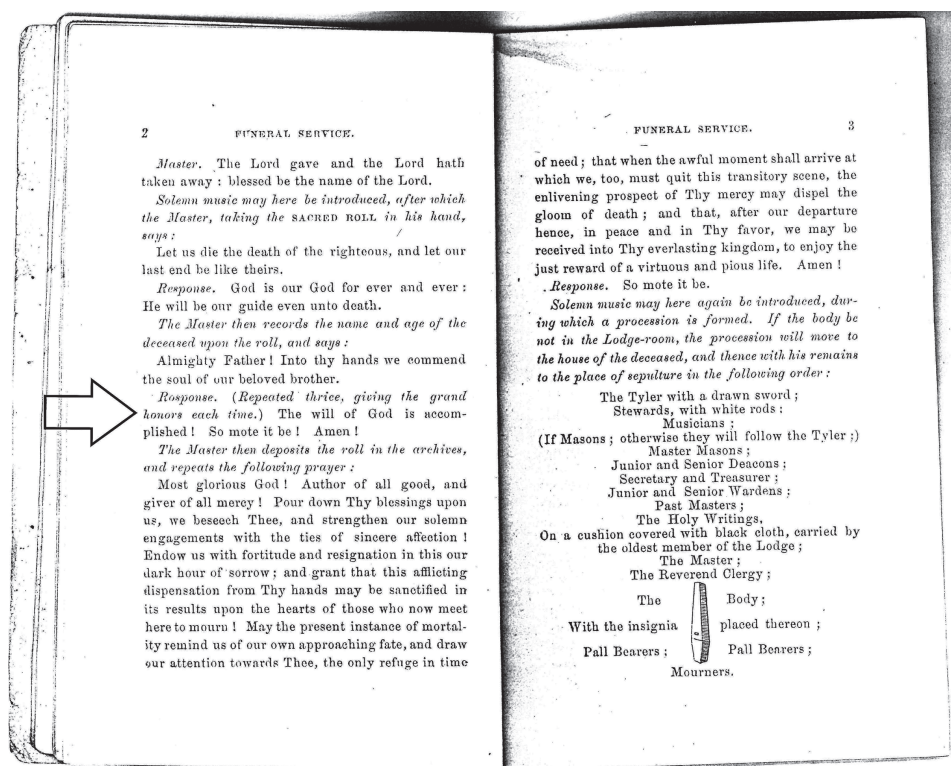


Fig. 6. Bylaws containing Funeral Service for Idaho Lodge No. 35. In 1866, Idaho Lodge (formerly No. 35, now No. 1) in the Boise Basin devoted sixteen of its twenty-six pages printed in its bylaws to the Funeral Service. The arrow points out the funeral Grand Honors (depicted in the Burial of Slade in Boise Basin illustration). At the bottom of the right-hand page is a depiction of the layout for the funeral procession. The coffin is illustrated, and captioned, 'The Body; With the [square and compass] insignia placed thereon [the coffin] ... Picture: Daniel Gardiner

In his Address as Grand Historian before the Grand Lodge of Montana, Cornelius Hedges says that the Masons of Helena had only just begun meeting, for a handful of days before Pococke's death on March 7:

The first attempted meeting of the Masons of this city was in March, 1865, and we gathered at a little cabin located somewhere near where Clo[r]e street now runs. ... There were perhaps a dozen, possibly a score of us, almost strangers to each other when we met, but mutual conversation and examination soon revealed that we were Brothers, true and loyal sons to a common parent, from which we were proud to trace our lineage. In a rather rude, extemporaneous banquet, we soon cemented a friendship and established a familiarity that gave us mutual strength and confidence in the trying



Fig. 7. L. Rodney Pococke. Leander Rodney Pococke was born in St Louis, Missouri c. 1840, and made a Mason not long before leaving St Louis. In 1864, Pococke travelled to Virginia City, Montana Territory, and from there to Last Chance Gulch (now Helena) where he was buried after his death. A short time later he was re-buried in at Bellefontaine Cemetery, in his old hometown of St. Louis.

Picture: Montana State Historical Society #941-479

and exciting times that quickly followed. Other meetings succeeded at various cabins, with new faces each time, with a larger circle of clasped hands, and with warmer and stouter hearts.

The sickness and death of Brother Pocock[e], whose christian name, Rodney, is still retained in one of the principle streets of this city, occurred not long after we began these informal meetings, and served to bring us closer together, and revealed to us, as perhaps nothing else could, the beneficent beauty of those ties which bound us.' It was a chill and stormy time that the poor Brother lay sick, with a leaky dirt roof over his head, and a raw, damp wind, laden with sleet, penetrating by the rude door and window, and between the illy-chinked logs. It was no place for rest, quiet, or comfort for any man, much less one whose life was struggling to be free from a feeble and sickly

frame. The gloom and discomfort was brightened only by the earnest sympathy and warm hearts of those who knew how to be faithful when common friends slink away and seek exemption.²⁸

There could only have been at most six of these meetings in March, as Pococke died on the seventh day, if they were meeting daily in increasing numbers. In a different Historical Address, Hedges said of the event:

In February, 1865, Scott laid out an addition to the town, below where Broadway now is, and running back over the hill to Rodney street. This latter street preserves the name of L. Rodney Pocock[e], one of the proprietors of Scott's addition, and the first to die in Helena. The season began in February to be very stormy and unpleasant. The cabins, poorly chinked and covered with a thin layer of loose dirt, were generally very uncomfortable and unhealthy. Mr. Pocock[e] was inclined to consumption, and could not endure the exposure. His sickness, in spite of the best care of many friends, soon ended in death, March 7. *Being a Mason, his body was borne to burial by those of the fraternity in the camp and laid to rest in the ground just west of where the school house now stands.*²⁹ [emphasis added]

That grave's location was on a slope overlooking the early town site, and would have been visible from anywhere in Helena. The service would have captured the attention of any out of doors at the time.

Hedges stated later, 'The first Masonic Lodge in Helena was opened under a dispensation from Colorado, August 17, 1865, in the second story of a log building where Gans & Klein's store now stands. Their hall was heavily carpeted with sawdust; no ceiling obscured the shakes, with which the building was aristocratically covered.'³⁰

Hedges's account in *Masonic History of the Northwest* repeats the story, again stressing the importance of the occasion in coalescing as a lodge:

Grand Master Wheeler, of Nebraska, in his address of 1864, speaks of having granted a dispensation, Nov. 17, 1863, to brothers Mark A. Moore, Samuel W. Stanley, Levi J. Russell, and thirteen others to open a Lodge at Nevada City (on Alder Gulch below Virginia City [in present-day Montana]) to be called Idaho Lodge... Brother Moore, who was Master of Idaho Lodge, was in Helena in the spring of 1865 and officiated at the funeral of Brother Rodney Pocock[e], a member of Virginia City Lodge, organized under charter from Kansas. *This funeral occurred March 7, 1865, and the occasion brought*

²⁸ Appendix B: Address of Grand Historian, Cornelius Hedges, *The Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Montana, at its Eighth Annual Communication, Commencing October 7th, A.D. 1872: A.L. 5872* (Helena, Montana Territory: The Rocky Mountain Publishing Co., 1873), 99.

²⁹ 'Historical Sketch of Lewis and Clarke[sic] County, Montana by Judge Cornelius Hedges – July 4, 1876,' *Historical Society of Montana, Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana; with the Transactions, Act of Incorporation, Constitution, Ordinances, Officers and Members*. Vol. II. (Helena, Montana: State Publishing Company, State Printers and Binders, 1896), 111.

³⁰ Hedges, *Contributions*, 111.

together the Masons in and around Helena and initiated the movement to organize a Lodge in Helena.

Nevada City soon declined and so ended the second attempt to organize a Lodge in Montana, then Idaho. Apparently these were failures, but not wholly so, *for it brought together those who were Masons and made them acquainted with each other, and in the stormy events pending and ensuing, it furnished the nucleus around which rallied the 'law and order' elements.*³¹ [emphasis added]

Here again we see that, although Masons lived amongst each other in the early gold camps, what brought them together was death, and Masonic funeral ceremonies. And, once acquainted with each other, they banded together to repel the criminal element in their midst. Hedges, like Langford, also believed that the fraternity's treatment of death prepared it for rallying against the criminal element, the agents of un-natural death:

We will not say that all the vigilantes were Masons, but we would not go far astray to say that all Masons were vigilantes. And the knowledge of this fact disseminated among the roughs and road-agents gave them a wholesome dread of seeking victims among those whose death they knew would be avenged. The story of the struggle between these elements has been eloquently told by Brother Langford in his book, "Vigilante Days and Ways," and does not belong to Masonic history especially. We hardly think the annals of history afford a more conspicuous example of the revelry of crime than existed in Montana from 1862 to 1866. There were no courts or officers of law, wealth was flowing from the mines in profusion, men passing constantly from one camp to another exposed to assassination and robbery, gambling and drinking were universal and escape for the criminal was easy.

We have seen how hard it was to plant Masonry here conforming to all the requirements of Masonic law and usage.³²

Hedges is quite certain that Bro. Pococke's funeral was the rallying point around which a new lodge was formed in Helena. In another recollection below, Hedges' possession of the only law book (a relic of Eastern institutions) in the camp is similar to Langford's statement that there were few Bibles in the Bannack gold camp. It must be remembered that for well over a year, what is now Montana operated without any legal apparatus. The dangers incident to life in the mining frontier, as they were without families, churches, and law, meant that any displays of Eastern institutional norms, such as Masonic funerals, could be comforting. It might also explain why Hedges returned to the story of the 'first' funeral:

In January, 1865, I had removed from Alder Gulch to Helena, where the Last Chance mines had been discovered in September previous and were proving rich and exten-

³¹ 'Freemasonry in the State of Montana,' J. M. Hodson, W. H. Upton, J. W. Brown, C. Hedges, *Masonic History of the Northwest, a Graphic Recital of the Organization and Growth of Freemasonry in the North West States, Comprising an Historical Review of the Institution* (San Francisco: The History Publishing Company, 1902), 539-40.

³² Hodson, Upton, Brown & Hedges, *Masonic History*, 540.

sive. . . . Here I found many friends with whom I had crossed the plains the year before. Being the only lawyer in camp and acquainted with the civil officers, just appointed, I was soon engaged in business that paid better than mining and was much easier, though I had done fairly well at that. I had left my family in the states and had no idea of staying more than two years in the mines or of engaging in other business than mining. I had but one law book, and that was for some time the only one in camp. It was a brief and unintentional monopoly that I enjoyed.

Though the winter had been exceptionally mild, the spring was stormy. The matter of providing shelter had been much neglected, and those who had any at all were lucky. Brother Pocock[e], lately come from Virginia City, had just started in the livery business when prostrated by mountain fever. The Masons who knew of it did everything possible for his care and comfort, little at the best, and he soon died. *It was at his funeral that the Masons of Helena were first brought together. In spite of the most disagreeable weather of the season, in sleet and mud there assembled a larger concourse of Masons than any one supposed to be in camp.* Brother Mark A. Moore, W[orshipful] M[aster], of Idaho Lodge, Nevada City, conducted the services as best he could.

As this was the first death we had to select a burying-place, and we chose the spot where the Central and High School buildings now stand.

The Masons having been once brought together continued to meet informally and in increasing numbers.

The purpose of organizing a Lodge in Helena was zealously urged by our brethren in Virginia City in order that with the two in that place, we might be in condition to organize a Grand Lodge.³³ [emphasis added]

William Bell, William Slade, and Rodney Pococke could all be said to have been given the solace of a 'proper' burial – at least as appropriate a funeral as could be had on the frontier. On the other hand, William Dowdle's funeral was a 'Bad Death,' and exactly the kind of example of that men like Langford, Hunter, and Hedges wished to avoid. The implementation of lodges immediately following these funerals helped facilitate the services necessary for a Good Death.

The following is a news cutting titled 'Masonic Resolution' announcing Pococke's demise:

Masonic Resolutions.

HELENA CITY, March 1865.

To the W.M., Wardens and Brethren of Virginia City Lodge No. 43, A.F. & A.M.:

Brethren: It is our painful duty to inform you of the death of our brother, Dr. L.R. Pocock. Bro. Pocock died on March 7th, and was buried with Masonic honors; Bro. Mark Moore acting Master. Bro. Wilson as Senior Warden, and Bro. Hedges as I.W., on March 8th.

³³ C. Hedges, *Masonic History*, 540–541.

At a meeting held on March 10th, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

WHEREAS, it has please the Almighty Father of the Universe, to remove from our midst our worthy and respected brother, Dr. L. R. Pocock; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Masonic Fraternity have lost a zealous and affectionate member, and the community at large a just and upright citizen.

Resolved, That we sympathize with the parent and relatives of deceased in their irreparable loss.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Fraternity are hereby tendered to Messrs. A. Kallenberg and John Peterson, for their unremitting care and attention to deceased during his illness.

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to the MONTANA POST, for publication, to the parent of deceased, and to Virginia City Lodge.

(Signed) C. HEDGES,
J. C. HUTCHINSON,
J. H. LOFTEES.³⁴

The Cost of Death

Hedges, in *Masonic History of the Northwest*, said that: 'The principal event of the year was the disastrous fire that occurred in Helena, January 9, 1874, destroying almost the entire business portion of the city and with it my office and all the records and property of the Grand Lodge.'³⁵ This fire also occasioned the loss of records for Helena Lodge No. 3 (previous to 1866, known as Helena Lodge No. 10, under the Grand Lodge of Colorado).

G. Booker and W. Porter were tasked by the lodge with copying as much of the damaged records as could be read into a new journal. A report was given to the lodge, as follows:

To the W.M. Wardens & Brethren of Helena Lodge No. 3, We the Committee on Lost Records Beg leave to make our report contained in the Book accompanying this; We have not made final Treasurer's Report as said report is due this night; of our present indebtedness we know nothing but your sect. will give you all information regarding the same; We respectfully submit our Report and beg to be discharged. Helena, M.T., March 21st 1874. Geo. Booker, William Porter.³⁶

Hedges's 1872 Address as Grand Historian informs us that he presided over several more funerals a short time after Pococke's in 1865:

Within a few months thereafter, it was my sad duty to conduct the services at the burial of no less than three Brothers, all of them entire strangers to myself and all the active members of our young Lodge. Such an event is always saddening, and challenges the

³⁴ 'Masonic Resolutions', *Montana Post* (Virginia City: D.W. Tilton & Co., Vol. 1, No. 30, Sat. March 18, 1865), 2.

³⁵ Hedges, *Masonic History*, 552.

³⁶ G. Booker, W. Porter, 'Report of Committee. on Lost Records' (Handwritten in journal, 1874), loose insert.

deepest sympathy of our nature; but none seemed so utterly shrouded in gloom and unrelieved melancholy as the sickness, death and burial of Brother Pocock[e].³⁷

Bills of 1865.	
Bill of Mr. Doyle	
for 1 barrel wood	8.00
allowed April 1 st 1865 - Jhs C. Farmer 2107.	
Bill of Mr. F. Davis (deceased,)	
Coffin	55.00
Digging Grave	14.00
Clothing	48.65
Fencing & Lumber	50.00
Painting X	2.00
Hearse & Team	20.00
Sending for Doctor	5.00
Doctor Bill	10.00
Nurse	10.00
Cemetery	
total	210.65
Amt. left in hands of F. M. White	

Fig. 8. Bills of 1865 (See page 24 for full transcription)

Fencing & Lumber	50.00
Painting X	2.00
4h	

Fig. 9. Detail of the Bills of 1865. Note the line item for painting the square and compasses on the coffin

In total, Rodney Pococke's brothers did more than convey his body to a final resting place. If M. F. Davis's funeral expenses were similar to Pococke's, then previous to his passing, they paid to send someone to fetch a doctor; then they paid for the doctor and nurse's time during his sickness and passing. New clothes were purchased to bury the body in the coffin that they had just purchased – complete with the well-known Masonic emblem of a square and compasses painted thereon. They paid for the grave to be dug, materials

³⁷ Hedges, 'Address of Grand Historian', *Proceedings*, 100.

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Helena Lodge No. 3, Montana—

Bills of 1865.

Bill	of Mr. Voyles		
	for 1 Cord of Wood		8.00
	— allowed April 1 st 1865	Chls C. Farmer Sec'y.	
Bill	of M. F. Davis (Deceased.)		
	Coffin		55.00
	Digging Grave		10.00
	Clothing		48.65
	Fencing & Lumber		50.00
	Painting XX [square & compass emblem]		2.00
	Hearse & Team		20.00
	Sending for Doctor		5.00
	Doctor Bill		10.00
	Nurce [sic]		10.00
	Contra	Total	210.65
	Amts left in hands of F. M. White		
	Amt Cash on hand	15.35	
	One Mare & Saddle valued at.	35.00	
	One Horse	20.00	
	One Pistol	10.00	
	One gun	10.00	90.35
		\$	120.30
	Dr. To Ranch Bill to date-		8.00
	— Amt Bal Due —	\$	128.30
Bill	of Perkins & Hughes		
	— for Rent of Hall allowed [sic] July 29 th 65.		40.00
"	" Parchen & Paynter		
	— To Sundries allowed July 14 th 1865		4.50
64	" " John Manning ordres' [sic]		
	— Order issued by J. R. Morrison		00
"	" J. A. Gaston		
	— To Sundries allowed Aug. 28 th 1865		25.25
		\$	213.05

The reconstructed paperwork from the Committee on Lost Records shows the above from page 68, in regard to the death of an M. F. Davis,

to construct a fence around the place, and a hearse and horses to convey their new coffin to the location. They settled Davis's accounts, and after disposing of two horses and a saddle, two weapons, and cash on hand, found that there was still a balance due. This his Masonic brothers paid out from amongst themselves. The same would have been done for Pococke. They also paid for a resolution to be published in the closest newspapers in Virginia City to announce Pococke's death, and sent a copy of it to his family back 'in the States.' They arrived in inclement weather to the spot, and performed the final rites they found to be necessary.

All of the costs above were believed by the Masons attendant to Pococke to be their duty toward him in ensuring that he had a Good Death – at least as good as could be had in a town that less than a year previously did not exist as such. Pococke's brothers also left knowing that they, too, would be cared for in death, should it become necessary. Helena Lodge, as such, did not exist. However, an unofficial gathering of Masons had nonetheless begun collecting and tracking expenditures. Following a disastrous fire in 1874, in which all of the lodge's records were damaged, the remaining papers were re-copied into a journal by a Committee on Lost Records (see Fig. 8). The costs surrounding the funeral of M. F. Davis, not long after Pococke's funeral, are shown. The cost of painting a square and compass emblem on the coffin? \$2.00.

A Most Impressive Lesson in Masonry

The 1867 Grand Historian's Address by N. P. Langford before the Grand Lodge of Montana may best sum up the relief and utility of Masonic membership on the frontier. Speaking of Bell's funeral five years before, he said:

And what more fitting occasion for such an event! Every Mason there present, in view of the circumstances surrounding him, could learn a new and most impressive lesson in Masonry. No one knew which of that little band might next be stricken down, nor by what casualty. Death by violence and at the hands of assassins literally stared each of us in the face. Masonry, hitherto known only as a quiet, agreeable, social, moral and peaceful institution, grew into a Briareus and put forth its hundred arms in all directions for our protection and support. In its ties of brotherhood, in its allegorical instructions, in its ample definition of the virtues which constitute true manhood, they found a bond of union already formed, which enabled them at once to initiate law and order, inflict punishment, and eventually to compel obedience. When the Masons of Bannack departed from the burial of their brother, every man of them was prepared to present a bold and decided front against the crime and recklessness which threatened their destruction. The interest of the occasion was increased by the presence of a disposition among all to compare their views socially, and become familiar with each other's antecedents. From this moment Masonic History commenced its lofty career in Montana. Other law-loving people, who, though not members of the Order, possessed

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the first and highest preparations to become so, united with our brethren in organized force to vanquish crime and drive it from our borders.³⁸

The lodge was to become the foundation of the Good Death for the various communities' transient townspeople, and thus, a permanent settlement could be trusted to be worth attempting in the frontiers of Territorial Idaho and Montana.



Fig. 10. Masonic procession in Virginia City, Montana, in 1867. One of the earliest Masonic photographs in Montana is of this procession. Virginia City is located in Alder Gulch. Processions such as this were a spectacle in frontier towns. Led by a marshal (far right, with upheld baton), locals were sure to take notice. Similar processions of Masons in regalia and equipped with paraphernalia such as rods or Bibles on cushioned boards paraded their way to graveside services. Picture: Montana State Historical Society #956-284

³⁸ Langford, 'Address,' Proceedings 14.

