

Freemasons and Railroading

Stephen Daniel

Virginia Research Lodge No. 1777

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We all know of Famous Freemasons who were industrialists, scientists, orators, etc. but have we ever stopped to think of those Brothers who have contributed to the industrialization of the world? When we think of some, the first ones who come to mind are:

Henry Ford – Creator of the modern assembly line.

Harry S. Truman – President of the United States and who ordered the dropping of the first atomic bomb.

George Washington, Ben Franklin, Paul Revere, etc. all who helped found and created our great Nation.

This list can go on and on.

Now let us turn our attention to the beginning of the industrial revolution. Two Brethren had significant impacts on the development of the steam engine and later on the use of the steam engine, in the form of a locomotive, as a means of transportation. In Scotland, James Watt, initiated into Masonry in 1763, took out a patent in 1784 for a locomotive, although it was never constructed. In Cornwall, Bro. Richard Trevithick built the first tramway locomotive in 1803 and in 1804 built the Penydarren locomotive – the first steam locomotive to successfully run on rails.

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There is no record on the Web of when or where Trevithick was made a Mason, but mention is made of a Masonic souvenir of his stay in Swansea, Wales: A glass vase inscribed with the name "Brother Richard Trevithick" in Indefatigable Lodge #237.

Now a few interesting facts related to Freemasonry and Railroads around the world. By the mid-1800's the impact of a growing railway system was being felt by Grand Lodges:

"The growth of the railway systems led to greater mobility and easier communication between the Grand Lodge and the Provinces".
History of the United Grand Lodge of England

"The advent of Railways in the 1840's led to a more active interest in Grand Lodge by the brethren of the Provinces and correspondingly larger attendances at the Quarterly communications and the need for devolution of real power to the Provinces was soon apparent"

The formation of new lodges or the growth of existing lodges around a "railway" theme spread around the world. In 1849, in Glasgow, Caledonian Railway Lodge No. 354 was granted a charter to hold and constitute meetings anywhere on Caledonian Railway property. Membership was restricted to those employed on the railway when initiated, although gradually this requirement was eased.

In 1949, "The Railway Craftsmen's Association of New Zealand" was formed and is still in existence. Its objects are to further the teachings and aims of Freemasonry among Railway brethren and to encourage Railway brethren to maintain interest in their

respective Lodges and in the Craft. The Association puts on degrees for Lodges throughout New Zealand, and presents a Master's apron to every member being installed into the chair of King Solomon for the first time.

Now let's look at the history of Comet Masonic Temple in Barcaldine, Queensland, Australia. Comet Lodge erected and re-erected its hall six times in nine years, beginning in 1876, moving it to accompany the extension of the Central Railway 300 miles across the country.

Unfortunately, in North America only fragments of published railway connections can be found.

Valley Lodge in West Pittston, Pennsylvania, was so named in 1871 because most of its original members were employed by the Lehigh Valley Railroad.

Windsor, Ontario's first Lodge in 1854 was known as "Great Western Lodge". As was the case elsewhere, the arrival of the railway in Windsor caused the decline of smaller surrounding communities and in this case resulted in the closure of Rose Lodge in nearby Sandwich.

Talbot Lodge No. 546 in St Thomas, Ontario was instituted in 1919 and became known as a railway Lodge because of the dominance of CPR and NYC railway workers as officers.

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Now to mention some out-of-the ordinary material showing the connection between railways and Freemasonry.

Phoenix Masonry's Museum has a B & O railroad signal lantern presented to the most popular conductor on the railroad by the Ladies Masonic Fair Association of Waverly Lodge.

A poster reproduction "Mail Carrier of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway". The locomotive shown on the posters has the Square and Compasses on the nose, but there is no information about the source.

And of course, there is a railway connection in Rudyard Kipling's "The Man Who Would be King".

Now here are some other Famous Freemasons who have connection to Railroading:

Sir Sanford Flemming, Canadian engineer and inventor mainly credited with creation of Standard Time Zone. (he developed this system due to the fact he missed a train, the schedule said 6 but no reference to A.M. or P.M.) He also engineered much of the Canadian Pacific Railroad.

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George Pullman developed the Pullman sleeper car used on trains and also helped create jobs for a lot of former slaves by hiring them to serve on his cars as the well-known "Pullman Porter".

And now let's travel to Promitory Point, Utah – it is May 10th, 1869 and a railroad from the East meets a Railroad from the West. A man named Leland Stanford drives a Golden spike linking East and West railroads and yes, my Brothers, a Mason linked the railroads on that date.