

Who doesn't love a treasure hunt?

An interesting piece of Camp Resolute history was recently re-discovered thanks to some historical research, impeccable timing, top-notch observational skills, and a little bit of good fortune. A memorial stone bearing an inscription dedicating the dining hall fireplace to Sir Robert Baden-Powell was recently re-discovered in a debris pile slated for disposal. The hunt for the stone is only part of the story. The stone itself and the builder of the fireplace directly connects Resolute with the founder of the worldwide Scouting movement.

For the past few months, members of the Camp Resolute Alumni Association and other friends of the camp have been inquiring as to the location of the stone, which many remembered from their time on staff or as campers. Volunteers researched the stone's history, trying to determine its fate. They even unearthed an old photograph from the 1960's showing its original placement, with the white-painted inscription reading "Dedicated to Sir Robert Baden-Powell by H.C.S. Smith"



Leader and Scouts in front of the Resolute Dining Hall, 1960's. The Baden-Powell stone can be seen directly in front of the chimney/fireplace.

The last anyone remembered seeing the stone, it had been placed back into its original position following the renovation of Whitman Hall front steps in the 1980's. At that time, the concrete porch in the front was raised to the same level as the loading dock seen in background of this picture, to the left, and a concrete ramp was added to aid accessibility. According to Dave "Moose" Thompson, the Camp Director at the time, "The rock was moved when they renovated and added the ramp. But it was placed right above where it originally stood." Sometime after that, however, it disappeared.

Here the story becomes more interesting. The team at CRAA began to research the stones' history in earnest. They uncovered an interview with Resolute's founder, Ralph Whitman, describing the construction of the stone fireplace and chimney. "I sent to National Headquarters, then in New York City, and they sent me a plan for a 40-foot x 48-foot dining hall with a big stone fireplace on one end." While Whitman did have some architectural experience, he needed a stone mason to have the fireplace constructed properly. "Two years before, while I was at church in Northborough with the Scouts, Hugh Smith came to me at the close of the service and offered to build a stone fireplace in honor of his school mate in England, Lord Baden Powell, the founder of Scouting. I asked him if his offer was still good and he said, "Yes, absolutely." Within a few days, he was camping out at Little Pond, and the Scouts (mostly Troop 4, of Marlboro) aided by an army mule and a stone drag were bringing from our own walls the 50 tons of stone needed."

Armed with that information, the researchers focused on Hugh Smith to help determine if his connection with Baden-Powell could possibly be true. Amazingly, Smith's story could very well be the truth.

Hugh Carrington Fox Smith was born on October 23rd, 1845, in Whitwell, Derbyshire, England. Census information from 1851 shows his family living in Nottinghamshire where his father worked as a "journeyman bricklayer". In 1872 Hugh Smith immigrated to the US with his wife Alice and settled in the Franklin County town of Gill where the 1880 census lists him as a brick mason with five children. By 1898 Smith had moved his family to Boylston in Worcester County, adjacent to the town of Northborough. He became a US citizen in 1904 and attended the Evangelical Congregational Church in Northborough, where he eventually introduced himself to Ralph Whitman, offering his masonry skills. While no evidence has been found to confirm that Smith and Baden-Powell attended the same school, there is nothing in the historical record to refute this claim either. Given Smith's background, it is at least possible.

The new fireplace and chimney were constructed in 1924. As Whitman noted, the stones for its construction were gathered by Scouts from any source available, including stone walls on their own property and many from the woods and fields surrounding Resolute. "On the day that we were to top the big fireplace, it was 100 degrees in the shade and speaking both for Mr. Smith and myself, I suggested that we postpone the toppey," Whitman remembered. "Nothing doing," was Mr. Smith's reply. "This is the perfect day to top the chimney". Hugh Smith was 80 years old when he climbed the scaffolding to the top of the chimney and finished the project.

The stone sat forgotten near the Resolute ranger station in a pile of natural debris scheduled for disposal. It is too large to be moved by hand, weighing close to 200 pounds. All the white paint that once adorned its inscription has weathered away. It was covered in moss and lichens, with countless stains and discolorations. It simply looked like an ordinary rock that had somehow rolled out of the woods.

Quite amazingly, while cleaning the debris with the camp backhoe, Camping and Program Director Hunter McCormick and Camp Ranger Davis Stockton noticed the rock and thought there might be some lettering on it. They were not able to make out the full inscription but thought they could see 'Baden-Powell'. They set the stone aside and continued with their work. A few days later, the CRAA team happened to be at Resolute for other business and of course, they asked about the stone, offering the above photo for reference.

"I know exactly where that is", McCormick replied.



The Baden-Powell monument as it sat, prior to cleaning.



The Baden-Powell monument after cleaning

Once located and verified, CRAA cleaned the stone using a stiff synthetic brush and some soap and water. Most of the growth came off easily, making the inscription once again visible. Once cleaned, Ranger Davis Stockton lifted the monument (with the tractor, of course) once again into its place of honor in front of Whitman Hall.

Hugh Smith lived in Boylston for the remainder of his life. He often visited his 6 children in his later years, scattered across much of the northeast US. While visiting one of his sons in the Bronx in New York, Hugh was struck by a car and died of his injuries on January 24th, 1930. He was nearly 85 years old. He is interred at the Pine Grove Cemetery in Boylston, Massachusetts.

The next time you visit Camp Resolute, take a quick moment at the front of Whitman Hall to recognize the efforts of Hugh Smith, and his tribute to an old school mate.

