

Remnant of Early Life in a Mining Town

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I recently purchased a fraternal society ribbon for a group in Quarry, Iowa. Earlier in the day I had been to an antique show in Long Beach and had found nothing but an Autolite cap lamp. On the way home I stopped in Carlsbad on the chance that something (or anything) might make the trip worthwhile.

The only items that piqued my curiosity were these two ribbons. They were fairly plain, the usual gold lettering on red for parties and parades and silver on black for funerals. I couldn't read anything but the location: Quarry, Iowa. Remembering the neat ribbon that Bob Schroth had found for a Croatian fraternal group in Bisbee, AZ, I decided to take a chance that Quarry was a real mining town and not just named for a local family. Once home I dug out my past copies of Eureka (April 1997 and July 1997) and compared the inscription: Rad/Vzbuzeni Skalniho Ducha, to that on Bob's ribbon. Nothing matched. Using the Internet I checked the Croatian dictionary sites. No luck. I finally e-mailed a contributor to one of Croatian sites. The reply message was "try Czech."

The Czech-Slovak web dictionary was only a little helpful. Cislo means number. Skalniho can mean rock, mountain, cliff, and a half dozen other things. At another web site I found the translation for C.S.P.S. It stands for the Cesko-Slovenska Podporujici Spolek; this means the Czecho-Slovanic Benevolent Society. They were founded in St Louis, Missouri in 1854, and are now the Czechoslovak Society of America. In addition to providing insurance the C.S.P.S. provided for burial costs, schools, cultural preservation, social events, and general community well being of its members. Only the larger lodges are active today. Bob Guthrie informed me that fewer than 100 people now live in Quarry. As was true for Croatia, the Czech and Slovak homelands were once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until its break up after World War I. My supervisor's cousin just happened to be touring in the Czech Republic at this time so we e-mailed him the information with a scan of the ribbon. The coffee-shop interpretation came back: "Order/Waking the Mountain Ghost." The "mountain" translation is understandably wrong when you consider that Iowa is dominated by mostly flat land to gently rolling hills.

From the Internet I found that Quarry, Iowa is located in Marshall County and was established in 1868 by the LeGrand Quarry Company. The company quarried fossiliferous limestone. Some exceptional crinoid fossils have been recovered from this site. The limestone was used to build the Quarry railroad depot in 1868 and the Marshall County courthouse in 1884. The quarry continues to be operated by Martin Marietta Materials for limestone aggregates. So it was a mining town after all. At three other locations in the state, Martin Marietta operates underground limestone mines.

I contacted Petr Sztacho, a Czech geologist and mineral dealer from Prague. Petr usually has a room at the Tucson show (Executive Inn) and participates in the mining show as well. Petr's rough translation was: "Society of Inspire the Ghost of Rock." I felt I was getting close to the answer so I took one more stab at it and contacted the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Carmen Langel, the curator provided the official translation from a list of C.S.P.S. lodges. The translation is "Lodge/Awakening of the Rock Spirit." Now that I know more about the circumstances of this organization I am convinced that the local quarrymen were poetically referring to their profession.

