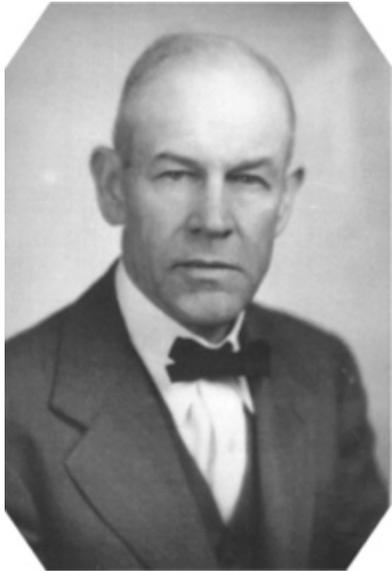


# A Step Back in Time

By Bobbie Sue Shelton



## DR. EDWARD LESLIE WILLIAMS

Dr. Edward Leslie "E. L." Williams, born March 24, 1878 was one of seven children born to James Chesley and Mary Teresa McLean Williams. He received his education in Eagleville and entered Vanderbilt University as a pre-medical student. After graduating as a doctor in 1903 he practiced in Mississippi for a short time. Returning to Eagleville in 1910, he entered into business with his father in a general store that his grandfather Chesley Williams had established in 1832.

Dr. Williams' heritage includes several generations of very prominent family members.

His great grandparents, James A. and Sarah Allison Williams came to Williamson County as newly weds. They married October 8, 1808

in Grandville County, North Carolina and came to Tennessee soon after. They settled in Williamson County east of College Grove and about three miles north

Dr. E..L.. Williams

of what is now Eagleville. James was a minister of the Methodist Protestant Church. It has been

said that James and Sarah did not like the free and easy ways of some of their neighbors, so he looked for a new location to raise his family. In 1812 with their expanding family they relocated along the old Nashville Pike, about twelve miles south in what would become Marshall County. Their new home-site was on Spring Creek, which furnished plenty of water for the farm and a freshwater spring supplied the family's new two-story log house until a well could be dug. Slave cabins, a gristmill, tannery, saw mill, barns and other outbuildings were soon added as the Williams plantation continued to grow. A blacksmith shop, woodwork shop and store made the farm almost self-supporting. The mercantile contained a general store, post office, wine cellar and tailor shop. James Williams was also a gifted tailor, cutting and fitting men's suits from the finest materials available.

The plantation deserved a name and "Civil Order" was selected because James Williams had said of the place, "Here I will have law and order." Civil Order became the name of the post office, and family members have letters post-marked, in James Williams' own handwriting, from the 1830s and 1840s.

James built his own church south of the family home and established a cemetery just west of the structure. As a minister he also traveled the region to preach the gospel. In addition to his busy life at Civil Order, he also established a water



Chesley Williams Store (1st Store from the left)

mill on the Duck River, five miles away.

Chesley, the oldest child of James A. and Sarah was born in their old home near Eagleville, in 1809. No man has figured more prominently in Eagleville history as Chesley Williams. He first settled in Triune, shortly moving to Eagleville. He married Elizabeth Jordan in 1830 and they were parents of ten children, nine who lived to adulthood. Their children married into the Ransom, McCord, Lowe, Sullivan, Haley and McLean families of the Eagleville area. Their daughter, Fannie Forrester Williams married Professor George Martin Savage of Murfreesboro, who brought higher education to the Eagleville community. In 1884 Dr. Savage became the principal of the Male and Female Academy. Dr. Savage remained in Eagleville six years. He established one of the best schools to be found anywhere; even the city schools of Tennessee were no better than the Eagleville School. According to the late Scott Williams, brother of Dr. E. L. Williams, "the Eagleville School was good because George Martin Savage, was often referred to as the most thoughtful man in the world and one of the South's fore most educators." On June 4, 1890, the trustees of the Eagleville School were present for commencement exercises. After the exercises, Dr. George M. Savage announced that he had been unanimously elected president of Southwestern Baptist University and would resign from the Eagleville School. It was noted that after this meeting, his father-in-law, Chesley Williams, a trustee of the school took to his bed. Upset is probably an understatement of how he reacted to the news of his daughter and Dr. Savage leaving the Eagleville Community.

It has been said that Chesley Williams sold the first goods in Eagleville. He established a general store in 1832, which was in continual operation by his direct descendants for 140 years when it was sold in 1972. The store was passed down from father to son, through three generations. As far as can be learned, it was the oldest business in the county at that time. In those early days, the store served as a center of barter. Homespun, hand made articles were bought and sold. There were few manufactured items in the stock.

During the Civil war the Yankees burned down the store building. It was rebuilt about 1868 in the same location, and business was resumed. It was about the time of the war that Chesley Williams took his son, James C. Williams, in as a partner. Six or seven years later, James C. and his brother, R. E. Williams, formed a partnership and took over the store. They continued its operation until 1894 when James C. bought out the interest of R. E. Williams, who then moved to Nashville.

A 1904 store advertisement: *Clothing, Hats, Shoes, Dress Goods, Millinery, Carpets, Matting, Drugs, Hardware, Groceries, Queens Ware, Etc. Country produce taken in exchange for Goods.*

Motto of the store when James C. was its operator was: "Everything from a pin to a threshing machine".

James C. Williams continued the operation of the store until 1910, when his son, E. L. Williams returned to Eagleville and took over the store. James C. Williams who was also the Eagleville postmaster 1893-1897, and the president of the Bank of Eagleville in 1904 died in 1913.



Front of the store in 1934.



Rear of the store in 1934.



Over the years, Williams Store was remodeled several times. In 1936 the building built in 1868 was remodeled for the last time during the Williams ownership. On the front of the store is a stone with an inscription of the establishment and the last remodeled date. The Eagleville and surrounding communities was very fortunate to have a store where a prescription of medicine, fabric for a quilt or dress, a pair of pants or a pair of shoes could be purchased. Since 1972 the Williams store building has changed ownership several

times and housed several different businesses.

As a doctor, Dr. Williams was able to prescribed medicine and give shots. Many citizens of Eagleville and surrounding areas considered Dr. Williams as their doctor. They would go to his store and tell him of their ills. He would diagnose their problem and sell them the medicine they needed. Anyone who was ever in Dr. Williams' store remembers his fateful bookkeeper and clerk, Miss Pearl Tucker who worked for him for 52 years. At times you would have thought it was she who was the doctor. She had worked for Dr. Williams so long she could and would diagnose your problem and prescribe a cure. Dr. Williams continued as owner and operator of the store until it was sold and he retired in 1972 at the age of 93. Miss Pearl who at the age of 80 was also working by his side until his retirement.

Dr. Williams was 1<sup>st</sup> married to Annie Ellen Corlett, daughter of Meredith Gentry and Sallie Annette Barker Corlett of Williamson County. She was born in 1883 and died in 1934 and was a school teacher at the Flat Creek School in Williamson County. Dr. Williams married 2<sup>nd</sup> to Katherine Ormes daughter of Weatherston and Connie Cooper Ormes. She was born in 1900 and died in 1970. No children born to either wife. Katherine taught school at Eagleville and later a substitute teacher for several years. They lived in the last house on the left at the end of Church Street and were active members of the Eagleville Baptist Church.

Dr. Williams was a leader in civic affairs and was also a director of the Bank of Eagleville.

He was known to be a very generous man. One night the store was broken into and robbed. Very important papers were stolen and later found in an adjoining county by a honest citizen who returned the papers to Dr. Williams. To show his appreciation, Dr. Williams purchased him a small farm. He and Katherine was also known to make very generous donations to their church and the Union Uni-

versity in Jackson, Tennessee in memory of his uncle, Dr. George Savage.

Dr. Williams died January 26, 1974 at the age of 95. He was without doubt one of Eagleville's leading citizens.



**Miss Pearl Tucker - Bookkeeper & clerk.**



**Dr. & Mrs. E. L. Williams & Scott Williams with portrait of Dr. George Savage**