

# A Step Back in Time

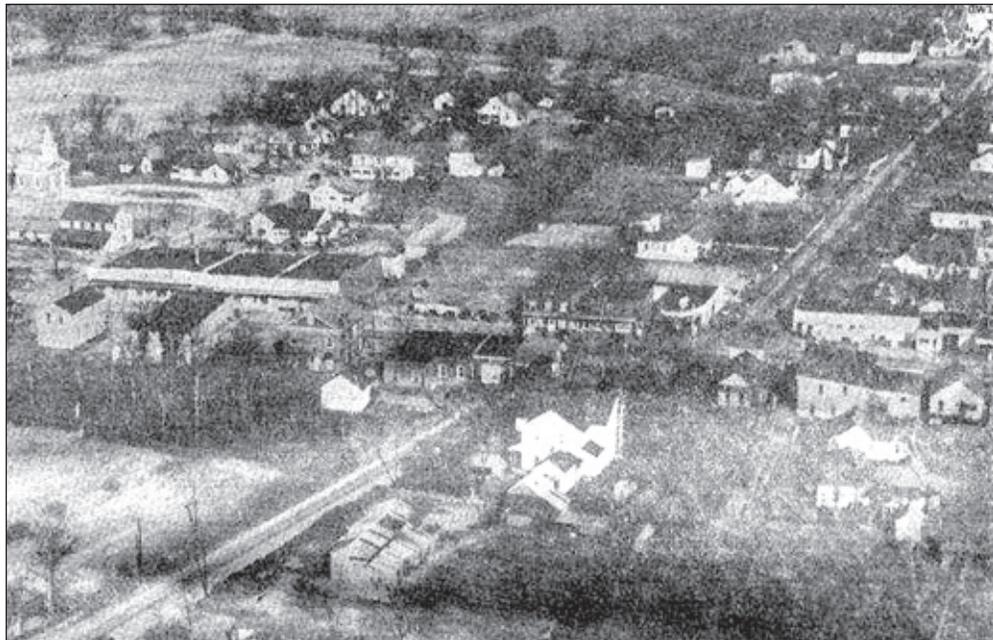
By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

Over the years, Eagleville has proven worthy of its name, adopted August 16, 1836. As this community developed, an application was filed for a post office under the name Manchester in 1832. This application was rejected because there was already a Manchester Tennessee and a new name was needed. About this same time, an unusually large eagle was killed on the hill located on the south end of town. As history records, Eagleville received it's official name from that incident.

The Eagle is known as one of the largest and most powerful birds in the world. At close range, they look fierce but proud and have long been the symbol of freedom and power. As we all know, Eagleville isn't one of the largest communities, but as the eagle, it has always been a community of strength and pride. Damage and destruction by fire has been one of the main challenges of this small Rutherford County community over the years, especially as a portion of the downtown main street area had eight known buildings completely destroyed by fire from 1952 to 1982. (See map)

## FOUR BUILDINGS BURN TO THE GROUND – 1952

In the early morning of June 11, 1952 a devastating fire raged in downtown Eagleville. The fire, discovered by an unidentified truck driver, aroused Junior Redmon who's residence was the first house south of the Las Fiesta Restaurant and he alerted the townspeople. In total four buildings were destroyed but with the efforts of firemen from neighboring communities, several other buildings were saved. Fire engines from Murfreesboro, Shelbyville, Chapel Hill, Nashville and Sewart Air Force Base in Smyrna came to Eagleville to help in extinguishing the flames. Eagleville itself, incorporated about two years earlier, had no fire department. Water was also hauled in from surrounding communities to fight the blaze. Burned to the ground were a poolroom, where the fire started, and a café, both owned by Herbert Phillips, W. T. Lowe and Son Hardware-Appliance Store



Downtown Eagleville prior to 1952. Large white building is the McRae Hotel. The defined roads are Hwy 99 and Allisona Road.

# Eagleville Survives

and Russell Puckett's Grocery Store, which also housed the Eagleville Post Office.

Brisk, shifting winds threatened to carry the blaze to other businesses across the street and into the residential section before it was brought under control about 4:30 a.m. Electric service in the town was disrupted during the fire, hindering the efforts to stop the flames. Traffic through Eagleville returned to normal at mid-morning after being blocked by fallen wires and fire-fighting equipment.

The café and poolroom were demolished with all furnishings. Only a deep freeze and a television set were among items of major importance saved from the hardware store. Russell Puckett reported that about half of his merchandise and everything from the post office was saved from the fire. Damage from this early Wednesday morning fire was estimated at \$100,000.

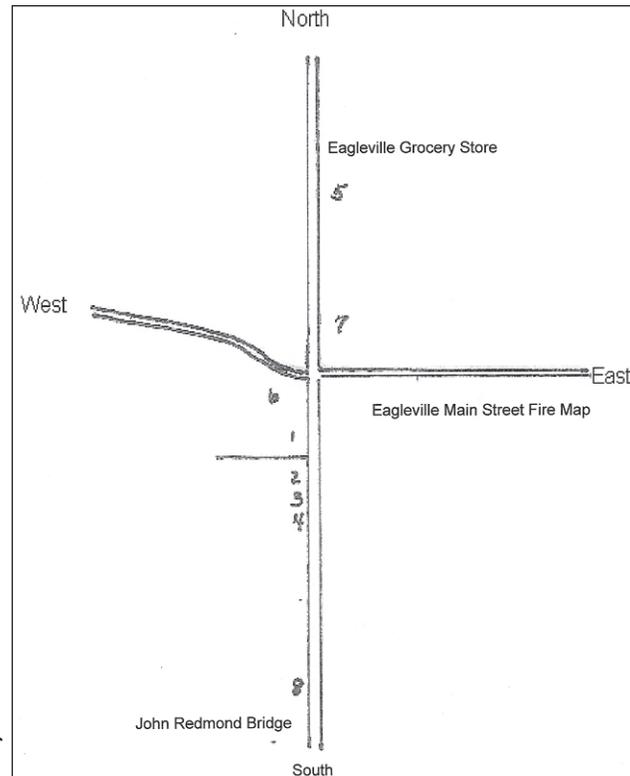
## FIRE DESTROYS RESTAURANT AT EAGLEVILLE – 1960

Again, June 11, 1960, as in 1952 several businesses were threatened by fire when the Eagle Nest Café, located on the north end of Eagleville, burned. This building also housed an abandoned hotel, located above the restaurant. Cause of the fire was not determined but was believed to have started in the upper level of the building. An adjoining skating rink and Puckett's Grocery Store were saved, but was damaged by smoke and water. Oscar Johns owned the 14-year-old building, built by L. B. Parker, and Junior and Nina Redmon operated the restaurant.

Firemen from Murfreesboro, College Grove, Chapel Hill and Sewart Air Force Base answered the call to help the Eagleville volunteer fire department prevent what could have been another major disaster to Eagleville.

## MCRAE HOTEL BURNS - 1963

On November 22, 1963 the McRae Home and Hotel burned to the ground. Located at the corner of Allisona Road and Main Street, this beautiful two-story house was built prior to 1892. Owned by Chesley Williams at the time of his death, it passed through several ownerships before Mr. and Mrs. Pleasant Samuel McRae purchased it in 1910. The McRae Family made their home here as well as rented rooms to hotel quests. At the time of the fire, a grand daughter of the McRae's, Imogene Sullivan Schatz, owned the



home and the only occupant living in the home was Charlie McRae, son of Mr. and Mrs. P. S. McRae. He was not injured in the fire that was discovered by a passing motorist.

#### MARSHALL'S GROCERY –1971

Another old building in Eagleville was consumed by fire, May 3, 1971. Marshall's Grocery, a two story building, located at the present site of Eagleville Drug Center was owned and operated by Howard and Helen Marshall. In 1935, G. V. Arnold purchased this property from W. F. Carson and operated a drug store – ice cream shop. In November 1944 the store and property sold to Malcolm "Pat" Bellenfant and in October 1945 the Marshall's purchased it. In addition to a grocery store, the building previously housed a gift shop, operated by the Marshall's and a barbershop operated several years by Bud Walker, who died in 1964. Arthur Barnes lived in the upstairs living area of the store building several years until his death in 1969. He sold newspapers from the entrance to his living quarters on the north end of the building.

#### TWO-APARTMENT FIRE -1982

A two-family residence located just north of the John Redmond Bridge burned June 14, 1982. This rental property was owned by Jimmy and Ellie Wilkinson.



Robert Frost receiving an appreciation award from Rutherford County Commission Homer Gannon

One of the tenants, Robert Frost age 81, was credited with saving the life of the baby of the other apartment dweller. It was reported Mr. Frost, confined in a wheelchair, entered the adjoining apartment, which was on fire, and was able to get the child and take it to safety on the front porch. The mother left the building to report the fire. The child and Mr. Frost was taken to the hospital, where they recovered from second and third degree burns. Several appreciation awards were given to Mr. Frost for his act of bravery. It was reported that President Reagan telephoned Frost from the White House, but Frost was unable to talk with him because of receiving treatment at the time.

The large house with a wrap-around front and side porch had



Marshall's Grocery burning May 3, 1971

previously been owned by the Corlett Family in the late 1800's and later the Shelton family. Walter J. Shelton, who died in 1951, was an Eagleville mail carrier from 1910 till 1943.

In addition to the above Main Street fires, many family dwellings and other important buildings in the Eagleville area have also been destroyed.

Union Soldiers burned the Harpeth Baptist Church, located about 1-½ miles north of Eagleville during the Civil War as it was being used as a hospital. The church was rebuilt in about 1866 at a new location in Eagleville and a new name, Eagleville Missionary Baptist Church.

Eagleville has had three school fires, one in early 1890, another one in 1923 that burned the Eagleville School building that was built in 1915 and in June 1994 a large portion of the school destroyed again.

The One Gallus Fox Camp on the Chapel Hill Road burned in February 1971. This was the headquarters of foxhunts, turkey shoots and many community activities.

The Rocky Glade Cumberland Presbyterian Church burned on Good Friday, 1995. The church was re-built in the summer of 1995 and by Thanksgiving, services were held in the new building.

With all the above destruction and much more not included in this article, Eagleville, strong as its name implies, survives.