

# *A Step Back in Time* By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

## I.O.O.F - INDEPENDENT ORDER of ODD FELLOWS

The first Sunday of May each year is designated for the Annual Odd Fellow Pilgrimage to the Tomb of the Unknowns. Permission for this date was granted by the Department of the Army, official custodian of Arlington National Cemetery. The first pilgrimage was in 1934 with the purpose of not only honoring the Unknown Soldier and the Nation's war dead, but also, the members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows who made the supreme sacrifice during World War I. On this day each year, Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, pay tribute and homage to fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives in defense of our country. A lone Army Sentinel guards the Tomb of the Unknown, day and night, the sentinel paces and guards. He stops pacing at the observance of the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs in the placing of wreaths at the Tombs. Each Unknown Soldier has been presented with the Grand Decoration of Chivalry, the highest decoration that can be bestowed on an Odd Fellow. These jewels are prominently displayed by the U.S. Army in the Hall of Trophies.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F), also known as the Three Link Fraternity is an unselfish and benevolent fraternal organization. It derived from the similar British "Odd Fellows" service organizations which came into being during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when unselfish and charitable acts were uncommon.



The Voting Ballot Box  
Used in the Eagleville Lodge

The word "Independent" in the organization's name was given by the English parent organization as part of the chartered title in the new North American chapter, founded in Baltimore Maryland in 1819.

The most widely encountered symbol of the IOOF – on signs and grave markers – is the three-link chain ("the Chain With Three Links", the "Triple Links") with three initials, 'F', 'L' and 'T', one each inside each link, signifying Friendship, Love and Truth.

Modern references state that the true reason for the name Odd Fellows isn't known or documented. Whatever the reason may have been, the unusual name has been the object of public curiosity.

As an organization, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows are dedicated to improving and elevating the character of mankind by imparting the principles of friendship, love and truth and making the world a better place to live by aiding the community, the less fortunate, the youth, the elderly, the environment and the community at large in every way possible. It aims to improve and elevate every person to a higher, nobler plane; to extend sympathy and aid to those in need, making their burdens lighter, relieving the darkness of despair; to war against vice in every form, and to be a great moral power and influence for the good of humanity.

While Odd Fellowship is not a religious institution, many of its principles, practices, and objectives are based upon the teachings of the Holy Bible. Many of the rites and ceremonies, of ritual and lectures, the secret passwords, signs, and counter-signs, have

a Biblical origin or significance.

On May 4, 1846, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows of Eagleville was chartered and designated as Lodge No. 17. The charter members were:

James M. Carson (b. 1788 d. 1863) and his wife, Ellen, lived in the Floyd Road area and are buried on the old Clardy Farm in that area.

John A. Moore, born in North Carolina abt. 1818, was a farmer. He and his wife Mary lived near Rover.

Thomas Cheatham, whom Cheatham Spring Road was



The Old Taylor Store - Home of the Eagleville Odd Fellow Lodge  
Demolished in 1987

named, was born in 1792 in Virginia. In 1818 he married Frances Uphamey Cannon Gentry, the widow of Samuel Gentry, who died in 1816. Thomas and his wife lived in a two-story mansion on Cheatham Spring Road at one time. In 1834, Thomas purchased land near Rover and later moved there. Frances Cheatham was a sister to Newton Cannon, the governor of Tennessee, from 1835-1839.

Samuel Morgan (b. 1815) and wife Martha (Carson) lived north of Eagleville in 1878 and were parents of 12 children.

Samuel K. Rankin and wife Rebecca (Whitworth) married in 1839 and were living in Marshall County in 1840.

William M. Nunn married Jane M. Jones in 1841 in Williamson County. It is believed that he was a Court Officer in Williamson County.

William Taylor – There were several Taylor families in the area, but it is believed that William Taylor, charter member of the Odd Fellow Lodge was William Stafford Taylor. He was born in 1804 in North Carolina. As a young man he first settled in the Versailles Community of Rutherford County, later moving to Bedford County. He brought with him a saw mill from North Carolina, choosing this area to live because of the abundance of red cedar. He married in 1827 to Nancy Taylor, (believed to be no kin). William Taylor died in 1887.

John K. F. Nunn

John W. Masefield

This group of individuals was from Eagleville, which was in Williamson County in 1846, Rover and the surrounding area. One must wonder how this particular group of men, joined together, 165 years ago and organized a Fraternal Organization that became a vital importance to the community.

The original “Candidates Question Book” reveals some interesting facts about the occupations of the people of the Eagleville area from 1846-1862. During that period there were a total of 146 members. Seventy-three, by far the largest number, were farmers. “Mechanics” came in a poor second with twenty-one. There were seven ministers, seven clerks, five teachers, five physicians, and five merchants. Since there were only two listed as blacksmiths, it is suspected that that was part of the work of the mechanics. Only one man said he was a laborer. It is indicative of the education of the citizenry that only one man made his mark (x).

Some of the occupations which are now practically non-existent were saddler, tobacconists, coach-maker, wheelwright and wool carder.

During the period from 1846-1862 the following people worked in Eagleville as mechanics: John C. Clemous, John D. Robinson, J. R. Chery, Moss Bobit, B. T. Wilson and Sterling H. Edmonds. John A. Wilson, William R. Puckett, and John T. Wilson were store clerks; James Knott kept a grocery store; James W. Manier was a merchant; James C. Nunn was teaching school; James Yancey was a saddler; and G. C. Kinnard was practicing medicine here in 1857. (The above information from the “Candidates Questions Book” was taken from the History of Eagleville written by Mrs. Minnie Dyer in 1972. We are very fortunate to have the history she recorded, since so many of the old records are displaced or destroyed.)

The exact location of the first meeting house of the Eagleville Lodge of Odd Fellows is unknown but believed to have been in an upstairs of an old store building located on the corner of Main Street and Salem Highway where Shelton-Smithson Service Station was later built. An old deed, dated June 1857, refers to a transfer of a lot and store house, where the upstairs was used as the Odd Fellow Lodge, from W. R. Nunn to John S. Parks.

In December, 1866, Chesley Williams deeded land for a different site, to the Odd Fellow Lodge:

Whereas I Chesley Williams of the County of Williamson, State of Tennessee, For the love and affection I have and entertain for the promotion of Education Science and Morality and for the high esteem I have and entertain for the members of the Eagleville Lodge No. 17 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, I do hereby give, transfer and convey to George K. Hemphill, W. G. Ozbourn, J. N. Hendrix, T. B. Wilson & F. S. Richardson, building committee and to George K. Hemphill, T. N. McCord, T. B. Carson, John Hendrix and S. S. Morgan, officers of Eagleville Lodge No. 17 of I.O.O.F. and their successors in office forever, A certain parcel of land situated in the County of Williamson District No. 23<sup>rd</sup> in the village of Eagleville State aforesaid: To have and to hold the same to the said

G. K. Hemphill, W. G. Ozbourn & others... George K. Hemphill, T. N. McCord, T. B. Carson, John Hendrix & S. S. Morgan, officers of Eagleville Lodge No 17 and their successors in office for the use and purpose of building and erecting there A Male Academy and Odd Fellow Hall in Eagleville and no other. .... Signed Chesley Williams – 24 Day of December 1866 (the above only a portion of the deed).

As of today, I haven’t located any information of a Male Academy, being built at the located mentioned above. There was a Male and Female Academy at another location in Eagleville.

The land given is believed to be the location of the old Taylor Store building previously located north of the present Eagle’s Roost Restaurant

building. Mr. James Bell Taylor operated the store which sold groceries, kitchenware, glassware and a few items of clothing, from 1912 until his death in 1940. His wife and daughter, Ruth, operated the store until 1942, when it was sold. The upper floor of this building was the meeting place for the Odd Fellows and other known organizations. Records of a Knights of Pythias Lodge and Woodmen of the World were also found when the store building was demolished in 1987.

In November, 1977, Jesse Tate acquired this property from the Grand Lodge of Tennessee, Odd Fellows. Stated in deed: Being the same property conveyed to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows approximately 100 years ago. The real estate has been held openly, notoriously, and continuously by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows since the time of the original conveyance.

The Odd Fellows were active and influential in Eagleville until the early 1970’s. One of their last acts of service to the community was the donation of a set of Encyclopedia Britannica to the Eagleville School. Mr. Jim Dub Ralston, who died in 1975, was the sole surviving member.

The Sixty-Sixth Annual Session of the Grand Lodge (Independent Order Odd Fellows) report, dated October 1906 stated: Eagleville reported from July 1, 1905 to June 30, 1906, 3 members were admitted and 2 were dropped. They had a total of 40 members – Total Revenue \$97.45, assets \$372.05 and expenses \$72.19. T. R. Ralston was District Deputy Grand Master and Representative at the meeting held in Chattanooga, Tennessee. W. J. White was Secretary of the Lodge.

On April 30, 1909 the Eagleville Lodge of Odd Fellows celebrated the ninetieth anniversary of the Order. An address was made by Dr. J. R. Moon (a local doctor in Eagleville for several years). After the other ceremonies, a supper was enjoyed by all.

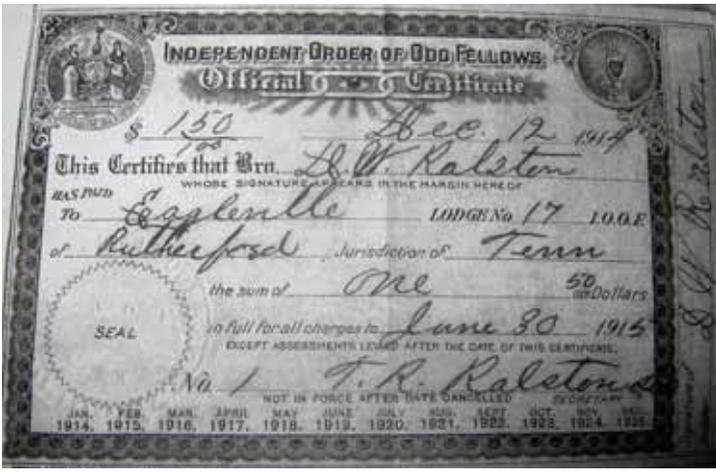
Also in 1909 there was a Rebekah Lodge organized at Eagleville by the Benevolent Rebekah Lodge of Rover. At this time, The Rebekah degree was open only the wives and daughters, or sisters of Odd Fellows are eligible. Although no records were found in the building, it is believed the Rebekah Lodge also met in the Odd Fellow Lodge Hall. (No other information known on this organization at the present.



A Podium used in Odd Fellow Lodges



A I.O.O.F Member Grave Marker



An Eagleville Lodge Certificate

**ROVER I.O.O.F. LODGE No. 395**

On 28 day of November, 1903, for the consideration of \$450.00, Mr. Dallas Crick purchased a store house and store house lot at a public auction in the Village of Rover, Tenth District of Bedford County. The property was previously owned by Mr. N. R. Taylor and wife Fannie. Evidently Mr. Crick was acting on the behalf of the trustees of the Rover Odd Fellow Lodge. On this date, Mr. Crick instructed Mr. H. M. Doak, who was in charge of the sale, to deed the property to W. T. Blanton, F. M. Jackson and J. E. Maxwell, trustees of the Odd Fellow Stock Company at Rover, Tennessee.

In January 1905, W. T. Blanton, J. E. Maxwell and F. M. Jackson Trustees for the Stock Company of members of the Lodge of Independent

Order of Odd Fellows, Rover No. 395 sold to Mr. C. C. Puckett the lower floor of the storehouse, to be used as a general store. The Odd Fellow Lodge reserved the upper floor and the right-of-way stairway to and from the upper second story. The Lodge received \$430.00 for this transaction.

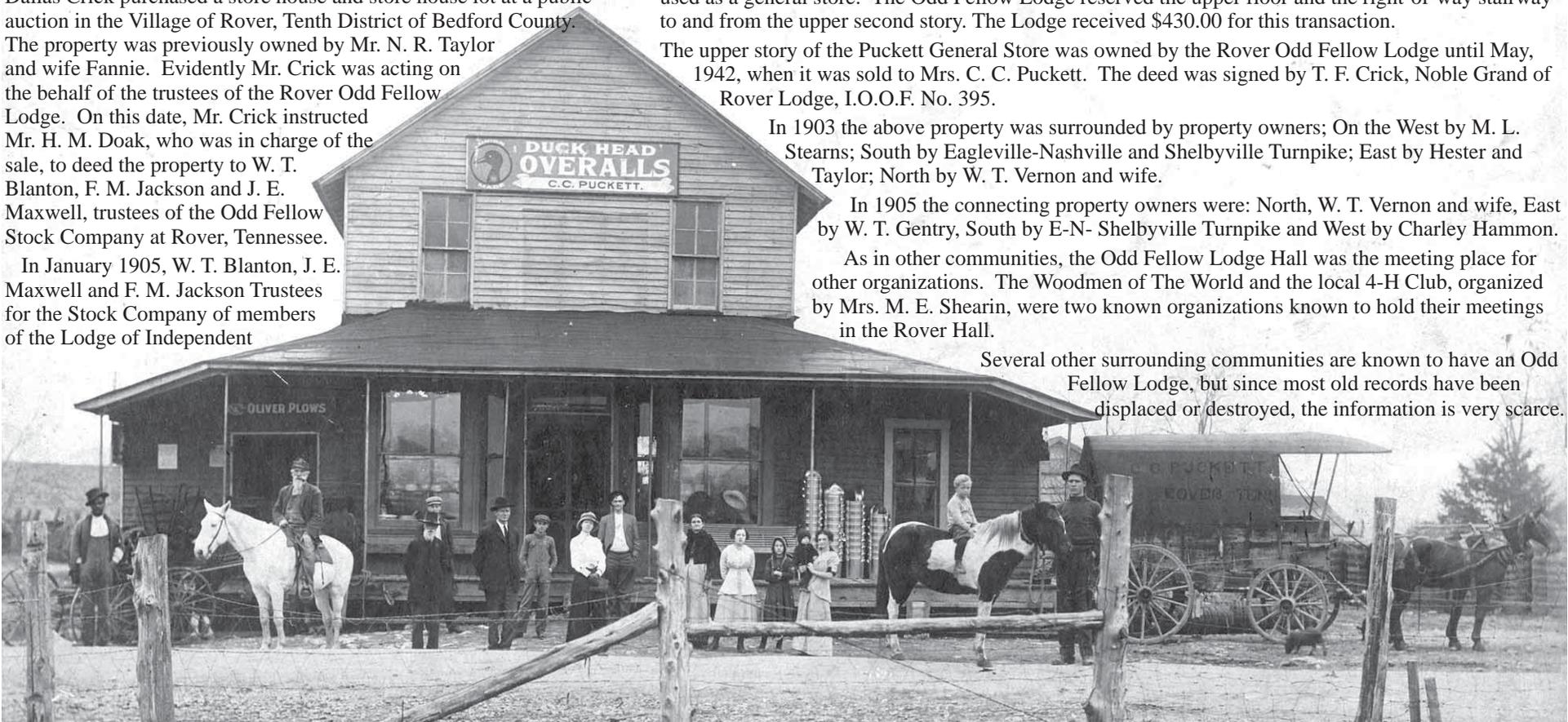
The upper story of the Puckett General Store was owned by the Rover Odd Fellow Lodge until May, 1942, when it was sold to Mrs. C. C. Puckett. The deed was signed by T. F. Crick, Noble Grand of Rover Lodge, I.O.O.F. No. 395.

In 1903 the above property was surrounded by property owners; On the West by M. L. Stearns; South by Eagleville-Nashville and Shelbyville Turnpike; East by Hester and Taylor; North by W. T. Vernon and wife.

In 1905 the connecting property owners were: North, W. T. Vernon and wife, East by W. T. Gentry, South by E-N- Shelbyville Turnpike and West by Charley Hammon.

As in other communities, the Odd Fellow Lodge Hall was the meeting place for other organizations. The Woodmen of The World and the local 4-H Club, organized by Mrs. M. E. Shearin, were two known organizations known to hold their meetings in the Rover Hall.

Several other surrounding communities are known to have an Odd Fellow Lodge, but since most old records have been displaced or destroyed, the information is very scarce.



Odd Fellow Lodge – C. C. Puckett’s Store - Rover, Tennessee -Desmoine McClain (Black Man), Jim Brown (on horse), K. V. Lamb (behind), Tom Johnson Sr., C. C. Puckett, Gup Bumpas, Mrs. Deanie Lamb, G. V. Arnold, Mrs. Tom Gentry, Alma Arnold, Jacie B. Gentry, Arnold Puckett, Mrs. C. C. Puckett, Russell Puckett (on pony), Frank Ray.