

A Step Back in Time

By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

As another one of Eagleville's older business buildings "The Dairy Bar" was demolished recently, so was a small part of our community history. Everyone realizes for progress to move forward, there have to be changes, which we'll gladly accept but there's always a little sadness too. In time, memories will fade of the little Dairy Bar built by Howard and Helen Marshall and named for their first grandchild, Melody. In the past, Eagleville had an ice cream shop and several restaurants but when Melody's Dairy Bar was opened in the mid 1960's, our community felt progress had come to Eagleville.

Chesley Williams, known as "The Father of Eagleville" died in 1892 and in his will, bequeathed the town lot, where the dairy bar previously stood, to his sons, J. C. and R. E. Williams. J. C. and his wife Mary Teresa acquired his brother's share of this property where a hotel, store building and several more buildings were located. In 1905 the property was sold to G. W. Joyce and his wife, Macon. It is believed that Chesley Williams built the hotel in the late 1880's or early 1890's to provide a place for some of the teachers and students of the Eagleville "Savage" School to live during the school week and also for the visitors who came to Eagleville, to enroll or visit their children who attended this prestige boarding school. The enrollment included students from across Tennessee as well as other states.

In November 1906 the land again changed ownership and was deeded from G. W. and Macon Joyce to Norman Newton Dryden and wife, Mary Darden Lowe Dryden.

Early in 1907 a new family was making plans to move to the village of Eagleville. Mr. Pleasant Samuel McRae and wife, Eugenia from the Murfreesboro area, was trading property with H. F. Brothers and his wife of Eagleville. The deeds to this exchange transaction were signed in January 1907. Mr. and Mrs. McRae and their eight children moved to their Eagleville property that consisted of a dwelling house and lot and a storehouse and another lot located north of the Bank of Eagleville. The McRae's kept this property in their possession until 1916 when it sold to Jeff Davis.

In December 1910, Mr. and Mrs. McRae purchased the hotel property from Norman N. and Mary L. Dryden. Mr. McRae along with his duties of running the hotel was also an undertaker in the early 1900's. He died in 1944 at the age of 96. Mrs. McRae and some of the family



McRae Hotel (circa 1910) - (L to R) P. Samuel, Grace, Eugenia, Nan, Myrtle, Bertha Charlie McRae, Jack Johnson & Mr. Caroan (Hotel Guests) (Grace, Nan, Myrtle, Bertha and Charlie are children of P. Samuel and Eugenia McRae)

members who lived in the hotel kept it open until the early 1950's. Mrs. Eugenia McRae died in 1959 at the age of 92.

In December 1959 the heirs of Sam and Eugenia McRae sold their share of the property to a granddaughter, Imogene Sullivan Schatz and husband, Fred. On November 22, 1963, motorist passing through Eagleville discovered the hotel on fire and the landmark was totally destroyed. Charlie, son of Sam and Eugenia McRae was the only occupant of the hotel at that time and he was not injured.

The McRae Hotel was the second fire that engulfed a building on this property. Earlier the fire of 1952 ravaged a grocery store/post office building located in front of the hotel, on Main Street. This devastating fire

destroyed a pool-room, a café, hardware, appliance and automotive parts store, a grocery store and post office. The grocery store with the post office located in the rear, was the only building destroyed that was located on the hotel property. The other three buildings that burned were south of the store/post office. At the time of the early morning fire, Russell



McRae Hotel in 1960 - Destroyed by fire November 1963

Puckett was the grocery store operator. W. H. "Buck" Dyer, first Mayor of Eagleville was the operator of this grocery in the late thirties until 1945 when Russell and Sue Puckett took it over. By acting quickly, all of the contents of the post office were saved before the fire reached the store/post office building. Harry Patillo was Eagleville's Postmaster at this time.

Howard and Helen Marshall, owners of Marshall's Grocery Store, previously located at the present site of the Eagleville Pharmacy, purchased the 1.15 acres from Imogene Schatz in September 1965. Melody's Dairy Bar was built soon after the Marshall's acquired this property. In 1988/89 after the death of the Marshall's the property was divided into lots. Billy and Lela Lynch bought the hotel/dairy dip property. This year, 2007, the new owner Doyle Wood, will again bring a change to Eagleville. Another new business will be welcomed.



Russell Puckett's Store - Destroyed By fire 1952