

The History of Stooksbury # 602 F&AM

Stooksbury Masonic Lodge # 602 of Free and Accepted Masons is located in East Tennessee within Norris Lake's mountainous ranges of Campbell County. The lodge is older than the lake itself. Stooksbury has survived fire, relocations and shared its buildings with stores, a United States Post Office and two schools. It is said to have occupied six different locations. The Masters and members have been numerous over the years since the opening in 1897.

The Grand Lodge of the State of Tennessee of Free and Accepted Masons signed a dispensation granting legally constituted meetings beginning on March 29, 1897 of Stooksbury Lodge Number 602. The appointed Master was H.W. Myers. It is believed that meeting was held at the Alvis Stooksbury Store across from Alvis's house that later Ernest Watkins purchased. The lodge was in the second story of Alvis Stooksbury's General Store. Also inside the building were a school and a United States Post Office called Forkvale. According to Historian Dr. Miller MacDonald, work began almost immediately on a new lodge building. Therefore timber was cut and the work was completed on June 4, 1898 of the second Stooksbury Lodge at a total cost of \$265.73 near the Ernest Watkins Farm. [1] [2] The date of the Charter was January 1, 1898. The first elected Master of the newly chartered Lodge was William L. Stooksbury. The determination of Lodge's name is not documented; however, it is believed that the name was in honor of Alvis Stooksbury or William L. Stooksbury.

Dr. MacDonald reveals further still in his book that on September 3, 1921 the Lodge purchased the Wheeler Store for \$500.00. The Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Tennessee of Free and Accepted Masons, Rodney Blake, gave permission to move the Lodge to the Wheeler Store at Agee, Tennessee. It was about three miles from the previous building. (Macdonald) This made the third lodge building and it was located at the intersection of the Powell and Clinch Rivers near the current Union, Anderson and Campbell County boundaries. This area is at an intersecting point of the three counties boundaries. These two rivers are now the undercurrent of the lake formed by Norris Dam in 1936 as it was the first dam built by the Tennessee Valley Authority. The first meeting held there was January 7, 1922. (Macdonald)

On January 5, 1935 the T.V.A. purchased the Lodge and its property for \$1000.00. A committee settled on an arrangement with A.J. Heatherly to build the lodge in partnership with a store he was planning on constructing in a community called Demory in Campbell County. (Macdonald) During the construction, all the meetings were held in the Demory School, its fourth location.

The A.J. Heatherly Store was completed and Stooksbury Lodge had its fifth location on the second story. The store's location was, and still is, at the three point intersection of Demory, Sugarhollow and Shanghai Roads. It burned down the night before it auctioned off. The next day at auction the remains were purchased by Charlie O. Wilson. He rebuilt the store ruins into its present building and called it, *The Demory Market*. It has been known as such even after numerous owners running the general store and restaurant. [3]

The Lodge was forced to find a new location after the burning of its fourth location. The members determined that a new building should be erected in 1968. The land purchased was about

100 yards from the store. It is believed that the Lodge returned its meetings back to the Demory School until the completion of the new building. On December 4, 1971 the first meeting in the sixth location was held. This is the current lodge. There was only one member, Hobart Heatherly, which has sat in all of the lodge's locations. (Macdonald)

The Lodge has bestowed the honor of Master unto 71 members. A lot of the Masters served several times and none more so than Henry C. Irwin. He served 11 times from 1904 until 1920. It is believed that Irwin is a descendant of the Irwin Family that Irwin Chapel, Union County was named. This settlement was also the location of the first lodge.

The Lodge at one time was home to Stooksbury # 489 Eastern Star. It was more prevalent in the 1930's. The majority of its members were the wives of Freemasons.

The Lodge's membership through out the years has contained very prominent and established citizens of the community. The Stooksbury, Walker, and Heatherly families have produced some of our great members and citizens. There are doctors, lawyers, law enforcement, professors, businessmen, politicians and other professions within the rolls.

Dr. W.L. Stooksbury, the first elected Master, was elected the head of the Well Springs Academy a two-year college school ran by the Methodist church. Dr. Stooksbury was one of two Baptists to be elected despite the pre-requisite of professing the Faith of a Methodist. The other Baptist incidentally was a Master of Stooksbury Lodge as well.

Dr. Silas A. Walker was the other elected head of the Wells Springs Academy. Dr. Walker was elected Master of Stooksbury #602 in 1917. He also taught school at Walnut Grove, within Campbell County's section at the 3 point intersection of the Anderson, Campbell and Union Counties. The school was used in 1890 and later. Another Stooksbury brother taught at the Walnut Grove School.

Henry Irwin was that teacher. Brother Irwin was a busy man as no man before or after has served as Master as many years as he did. He was a just man for his Lodge and community.

The surname of Heatherly has been a solid stone in the foundation of the Lodge. There have been five Masters and numerous members of this name. The Heatherly Masters served an accumulated sixteen years of the Lodge's one hundred and thirteen year history. The first Heatherly Master was Hobart D. Heatherly in 1925. The last one was Ben H. Heatherly in 1961. The Lodge's first four books in its archives were donated by Hobart D. Heatherly, son of George Heatherly, a member as well.

The Lodge has business owners from nearly all occupations. The range is from Adcock Home Insulation Company to Wilson Gas Company. Adcock Home Insulation Company owned by Elias "Junior" Adcock, P.M. and current Secretary. Junior joined the Lodge that his grandfather, Elias Adcock, was a member at and that is Stooksbury #602. One of the Lodge's Life Members, Vaughn Wilson P.M., owns Wilson's Gas, a company that specializes in propane. Wilson has been in business for 30 plus years. The list can go on and on.

Our lodge has never had the privilege of raising a member to the Grand Lodge of Tennessee. The lodge has produced several Chairmen to District 18 of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee. Edgar F. Overbey served as its chairman for 16 years. Ronnie Murray was the last one to serve.

Today, the Lodge no longer has an Order of Eastern Star. However, it is still active in the community. It allows the Campbell County Election Commission to have a regularly scheduled voting precinct on site. People in its community use the Lodge for parties and other events. Charities are still a vital role of the seventy seven members Lodge. The Widow and Orphans Christmas Fund is an annual event. A regular charity is giving money and supplies to the "Hospitality House" in Oak Ridge. The House provides lodging for patient's families in long term treatment at the Methodist Hospital. The family stays over night for free during the in-patient treatment of their love-ones.

Stooksbury #602 has seen its membership numbers gradually decrease over the last few decades. However, the membership will never be extinguished. Its members will always welcome all Freemasons in good standing. The current stated meeting is held on the first Tuesday of each Month. Dinner is served after six o'clock in the evening with the meeting beginning promptly at seven o'clock.

Macdonald, D. M. *A History of Campbell County, Tennessee Volume One*.

[1] A History of Campbell County, TN Volume One page 141 , by Dr. Miller MacDonald

[2] Walnut Grove and Memories of 1770 - 1936, page 42, by Nell Albright

[3] Elias Adcock