

THE ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR

HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

What are they? Where are they? Why are they important?

The Historical Landmarks are part of the Order's history. The "Little Red Schoolhouse," first known as the "Richard Literary Institute" and in 1848 it was rechartered as "Eureka Masonic College," where our founder, Dr. Rob Morris, served as Principal. This is the place where he first conceived the degrees of our Order. It is located 50 miles north of Jackson, MS.¹ "After the last session of school held in the building, in 1958-59, the Holmes County Board of Supervisors leased the property to the Grand Chapter of Mississippi for a twenty-five year period."² In 1968, the Grand Chapter of Mississippi obtained legal title, by special act of the Mississippi Legislature, to the property in exchange for an equal, adjacent tract of land. Since securing possession of the schoolhouse, the members of the Grand Chapter of Mississippi have spent vast amounts of money, time, and effort in a long-range program of restoration. A fence enclosed the property, and rest rooms of red brick have been built. A pavilion, erected in 1962, shelters crowds assembling there in August of each year for a Festal Day picnic. This picnic attracts hundreds of Eastern Star families from Mississippi as well as neighboring states. Each year during the Grand Chapter session [held in June], a tour to the Schoolhouse is conducted by the Board of Trustees, providing an opportunity for out-of-state guests to share the pride which Mississippi members feel in the preservation of this shrine."² It is open daily from 9:30 a.m.– 3:30 p.m. daily at no charge. Sale of souvenirs are available.²

The "Rob Morris Home" is the second of the four Historical Landmarks and is located in the historic district of Central LaGrange, KY. Dr. Rob Morris moved his wife, Charlotte, and their nine children to LaGrange KY in 1860, where he worked at the Kentucky Masonic College. In 1862, he bought the house, built in 1840, that we know as his home. "Among the highlights of the architecture of the house are the front doors flanked by over lights and side lights; a chimney on its west side that is typical of coastal North Carolina chimneys, but extremely rare in Kentucky, and a side hall plan. Non-historic additions to the house include a carport. The furnishings inside the house date from the time Rob Morris lived in the home and some were actually owned by Dr. Morris (en.wikipedia.org). The Rob Morris Home Foundation is a 501-C3 entity. Its sole purpose is to take care of the Rob Morris Home in LaGrange, KY. Donations to the Rob Morris Home is tax deductible."¹ The website of "Oldham County, KY's Famous People" includes Dr. Rob Morris as one if the individuals who contributed the pivotal formation of American history and was once considered the "Gateway to the Western Frontier." The website also states," The Rob Morris Home in La Grange, Kentucky is kept as a shrine to Rob Morris by the Kentucky Grand Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. He and his wife are buried at the Valley of Rest Cemetery within the town limits of La Grange, KY. The Oldham County Historical Society presently owns the Presbyterian Church where he preached, now known as the Rob Morris Educational Building, and uses it for educational classes, meetings and public programs on their history center campus. It was remodeled and dedicated on August 20, 2006, by Freemasons and the Order of the Easter Star. Rob Morris said there were two things in life dear to his heart: his little Presbyterian Church and

Freemasonry. He taught at Funk Seminary which was a college for children of Freemasons. He also inducted Clara Barton into the Order of the Eastern Star.”³

The third historical landmark was first known as the “Perry Belmont House,” and is located in Washington, D.C. It is the International Headquarters of The Order of the Eastern Star. The business offices of The Order of the Eastern Star are located in part of the house. A portion of the house is also the residence of the Right Worthy Grand Secretary. It was designed by renowned Parisian architect Ernest-Paul Sanson and built in 1909. The inside has 11 fireplaces, most of which have hand-carved marble mantles. “All of the marble came from Italy, all of the wood from Germany, and all of the metal from France. The three-story, wedge-shaped building occupies an entire triangular city block.” Tours may be scheduled to see the elegance embodied inside this architectural wonder. Additionally, virtual tours are available on the General Grand Chapter Website.¹

The fourth and last historical landmark was established in 1932. It is the International Peace Garden located on the border of North Dakota, of the United States and the Province of Manitoba, Canada. It was a collaboration between members of the order of the Eastern Star in both the United States and Canada. Both countries contributed hundreds of acres to exhibit a living testimony of peace and harmony between the two countries.⁴ Entrance to this landmark is available from both countries with a valid passport. There are over 2300 acres nestled in the Turtle mountains, and beautifully landscaped with flowers, fountains, a chime, a lodge, a museum, flower gardens, hiking trails, scenic drives, and displays.⁵

Included in the International Peace Gardens is the original monument symbolizing the joint effort which contains both the United States Flag and the Union Jack. “50,000 individuals traveled from all over the United States and Canada to witness the groundbreaking and dedication ceremony. The first buildings constructed on the site were the barracks that housed the Civilian Conservation Corp workers as they worked to create the garden. The Historic Lodge was constructed after the barracks and still serves as a monument to early times and used for a variety of IPG events today.”⁴

Another structure located on the site is a floral clock donated by Bulova in 1964 and is an exact duplicate of the original Bulova Floral Clock in Berne, Switzerland. It has a clock face of 18-feet in diameter with over 2,000 annual flowers.⁴

Other structures on the site include fountains, a chime, a conservatory and a café. More recently added are “the Carillion Bells, the Hands of Peace sculpture, and the 9/11 Memorial [which were] possible through generous gifts of organizations that continue to support the vision of the garden’s original founders.”⁴ Also available are rental cabins and camping by reservations. Various events are ongoing all year that may be found on their website at www.peacegarden.com.⁶

While there are more than 200 structures within the boundaries of the Peace Garden, the only building on the Canadian side of the garden is the Willis Pavilion, built in 1967 as part of the Canadian Centennial Project. [the Peace Chapel was] built in 1968. It is a beautiful stone structure

that includes imported French colored glass panels. The Chapel is constructed from Manitoba limestone and inscribed with quotes of peace from international leaders.⁴

The Peace Chapel is the only building that lies directly on the border straddling both the United States and Canada. “Peace Chapel is sponsored by the General Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star. Tyndall Stone walls are embedded with marine fossils and inscribed with quotes.”⁶

This Chapel was the primary project of the 33rd Triennium of the General Grand Chapter of the Order. It was dedicated in 1970 and completed in 1972. Members of the Order of the Eastern Star from the United States and Canada in a joint effort made this landmark possible. The Peace Chapel is non-denominational and is often rented out for weddings and other occasions.

Many of our members are unaware of these Historical Landmarks. Please visit the General Grand Chapter website at www.easternstar.org for more information.

Sister Valerie Tooma Gray, Historical Landmarks Committee Chairman in Florida

Bibliography:

¹ www.easternstar.org

² www.holmescountymms.org/little-red-schoolhouse

³ www.oldhamkyhistory.com/famous-people/ (click on “ROB MORRIS” for detailed information)

⁴ www.peacegarden.com/history

⁵ www.peacegarden.com/discover

⁶ www.peacegarden.com