

Love and Charity was first black fraternal organization

By Clarence Newsome
Centennial Education Committee
 In the beginning of black fraternal organizations in Ahoskie, the Love and Charity was the first. The slogan of this organization is "Love to God, True to each other, Mercy to all mankind." Annual and funeral services were held in churches.

The organization built a small slab building on what is now the Ahoskie-Cofield Road. Later, the Love and Charity, Masons and Odd Fellows erected the building that is now located at Hayes and Rhue streets. The building is known as the Love and Charity Hall.

Later the Knights of Pythians and Eastern Star Lodge were organized.

Fraternal organizations functioning as late as 1939 were the Love and Charity, United Order of Queens of the Orient, the Elks, the Masons and the Tents.

The Elks met in the Love and Charity Hall when the group was first organized. The Elks have made much progress and now have a large membership.

Later, the Elks erected a building at the corner of Hayes and Maple streets, not only for their use but for the community at large.

Founded in Ahoskie

The Queen of the Orient had its origin in Ahoskie. The group met in the Love and Charity Hall when it was first organized.

The founder, Mrs. Mary E. Sills, had been a citizen of Ahoskie for 40 years, serving as a teacher in the community and as a supervisor of Negro schools in Hertford County for a year.

The objects of the organization were: to unite the womanhood and manhood morally, financially and religiously, to promote the health and happiness of its members by teaching the true principles and laws of health, to provide for the sick, a responsible burial for the dead and an endowment for their relatives and children.

When started the Queen of the Orient had branch offices in Winston-Salem Tarboro, Graham, Wilson, Lewiston, Edenton, Elizabeth City, Powellsville, Jamesville, Washington, Wilmington, Plymouth and Ahoskie.

The membership in 1939, including the branches, was about 1,200. It paid out \$8,000 in claims in its first 15 years and held a 15th anniversary in Ahoskie in 1939.

Hall renovated

The Love and Charity/Masonic Hall at Hayes and Rhue streets was renovated in 1976 during the administration of George A. Everett Sr. as worshipful master of Jerusalem Lodge #96.

At the same time, Mrs. Amaza H. Davis was worthy matron of the Rose of Sharon Chapter #611 of the Eastern Star.

During this time, past master Hawley J. Newsome, a master brick mason by profession and a masonry instructor at Ahoskie High School, served as master overseer of the renovation project and provided hands-on workmanship in brick-veneer the entire exterior of the lodge hall — as it is now.

Newsome offered to give his services for free with the request that his name be placed in the record book of all three secret orders — the Masonic lodge, the Eastern Star chapter and the Love and Charity lodge, according to Everett.

Newsome was assisted by a fellow master mason, Clayton Saunders, who played a major role in all aspects of the renovation program.

As a masonry teacher, Newsome would bring his class to the lodge hall in the afternoons to get practical experience in laying bricks.

Mrs. Davis would come to the lodge on Saturdays with other members of the Eastern Star chapter to cook and serve food to those working on the renovation project.

Inspired by grandfather

The "all-seeing eye" over the front door was the result of inspiration received by Everett from his grandfather, during his childhood.

The walkways in the front and on the sides of the building were laid by lodge members as landmarks of their contributions to the renovation project for generations to come, according to Everett.

The roof was repaired when Clarence Beasley was worshipful master. In so doing, the bell and bell tower were removed.

During the administration of Dupont Davis as worshipful master, the present bell tower, in the front of the building, was constructed. This was inspired by a dream which Everett had regarding its name, meaning and dimensions. He named the bell tower Three, Five and Seven, representing youth, middle age and man. The concept was based upon the following passages of scripture: I Corinthians

13:11 and Ecclesiastes 12:1. Newsome and Saunders did the masonry work for the bell tower on a four foot by four foot by four foot plan. Clarence Askew Jr. assisted in putting it atop the tower.

Everett led the fund-raising drive to build the brick picket fence at the rear of the lodge hall. It was named in his honor by Davis as the George A. Everett Lounge. Newsome and Saunders did the brick

work in the construction of the fence.

Home for 3 groups

Currently, the lodges uses the building for their regular meetings are Jerusalem Lodge #96, with

Davis as worshipful master; the Rose of Sharon chapter #611, Order of the Eastern Star, with Mrs. Quay D. Winslow as worthy matron; and the Love and Charity Lodge, with Mrs. Annie Riddick as worthy su-

perior. The building also is frequently used for a variety of other activities such as organizational meetings, receptions, political rallies and sundry other purposes.

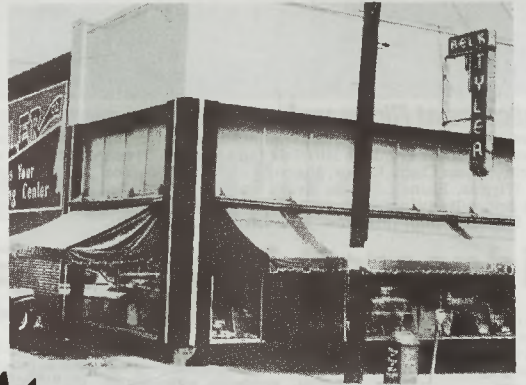
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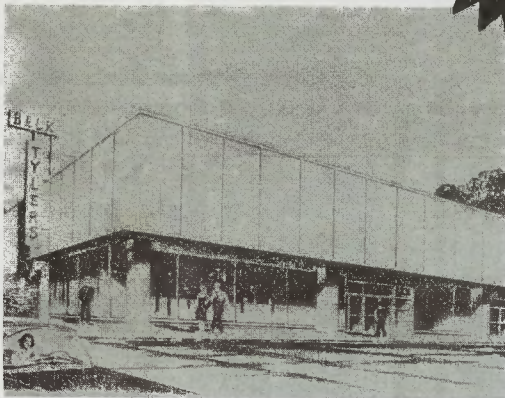


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