

ODD FELLOWS

The Lincoln Library of Essential Information imparts this knowledge to us of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows:

"A secret, Fraternal, Beneficiary Society, founded in England sometime during the second quarter of the 18th Century. A Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows for England was formed at London in 1803. In 1809 a subordinate Lodge at Manchester, successfully declared itself independent of the Grand Lodge, and, as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity, constitutes today the largest English branch of the Order.

Thomas Wildey is considered to have been the founder of the Society in America, although other Lodges are known to have existed before Wildey came to the United States. In 1819, Wildey and other English associates organized a Lodge of Odd Fellows in Baltimore, which received a charter from the Manchester Unity. In 1843, the American order declared its independence of the older society.

Three degrees are conferred in Lodges of Odd Fellows. Those who have received the third degree are eligible to membership in an encampment, where three further degrees are conferred. A uniformed degree of the order, known as the Patriarchs Militant, is open only to those who have received the Royal Purple Degree of an encampment. The Rebekah degree for women members was established in 1851."

As the above indicates, there were three distinct orders of Odd Fellows - the original order in London, the Manchester Unity and the American. In Maynard we had two lodges, one affiliated with the Manchester Unity and the other with the American Order. Gutteridge's History informs us that Loyal Assabet Lodge, I.O.O.F Manchester Unity was instituted January 17, 1884 and two and a half months later on April 2, 1884 the Maynard Lodge, I.O.O.F. of the American Order was organized. The reasons are obscure why the need for two lodges. Possibly the people of English descent wanted the Manchester Unity and the Scotch and other nationalities wanted no part of it.

June 23, 1899 news report shows the following officers as being installed: In Manchester Unity - Isaac Binks, Fenton Rogers, H. Oxford, David Miller, Gavin Taylor, J.E. Phillips, William Whittaker, J.J. Morgan.

July 14, 1899 news report shows the following officers being installed in the I.O.O.F. Lodge 131: Lewis Shaw, John Gerow, Henry Kimmel, Tom Carey, George Henderson, William Stewart, George Champion, Jr., Joseph Singleton, Clifford Cheney, George Robinson, Reid Lyons, John Marsden, Chaplain Charles Roberts, Lorenzo Clark.

Both Lodges carried on social affairs of various kinds, pool, smoke-talks, dances, Balls on top of initiation of new members and meetings.

We do not know the total membership of either Lodge but a February 6, 1914 news article of the Manchester Unity Lodge observing its thirtieth anniversary brings out that twenty-three members initiated this Lodge and one hundred and ninety-four were present at this particular anniversary program. On May 2, 1919, Lodge 131 observed the One Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of the American Order and the thirty-fifth of the local lodge at Cooperative Hall with four hundred in attendance. The Mizpah Rebekah Lodge for women members were part of this Lodge and participated in the observances. April 30, 1909 this same Lodge celebrated its twenty-fifth at Masonic Hall. The following individuals were on the celebrations committee at the two affairs: Mrs. Moses Chandler, James Eaton, J.A. McPherson, Fred Randell, L.E. Rodway, William Bishop, Clifford Cheney, A.M. Howard, A.E. Randell, Robert Lester, Fred Archer, Tom Smith, Ralph Case, Arthur Champagne, Tom Denniston, Oliver Trees and additional Rebekahs were Rhoda Smith, Mary Leithead, Sadie Case, Jeannette Graham, Gertrude Keene and Lucy Case.

March 11, 1921 an Odd Fellows Ball took place in Colonial Hall with Frank Sheridan's Orchestra playing. The news report does not indicate which order this was.

November 9, 1934 officers were installed of the I.O.O.F. Manchester Unity at Odd Fellows Hall as follows: Tom Usher, Fred Brown, Isaac Binks, George Brown, William Newman, Al Billett, Louis Emerson, William Coulter, James Coulter, Charles Coulter and Fred Green. Note the above name - I.O.O.F. Manchester Unity. This would indicate that the two orders must have merged some time in the past. There

is no record of it in newspapers and in conversation with Mr. Albert Hodgess he maintains that the American Order was the one in existence in the 1930's. If there was a merger, possibly a compromise name, as the above would indicate was adopted. A curious note of August 20, 1915 in the paper bears quoting in full. "Movement afoot to organize an Odd Fellows Association with rooms in I.O.O.F. Block. Rooms open every evening. Papers, books, magazines, pool and card tables. All Odd Fellows Welcome." Possibly it was sometime after that there was a merger.

It was Lodge 131 that had its headquarters in the I.O.O.F. Block on Nason Street. This building was originally built by Loew and the upstairs rented to the Lodge.

The Rebekah's are still in existence in 1966 but the Odd Fellows weakened in membership by the early fifties so that the lodge was disbanded. A paper will be prepared on the Rebekahs.

All dates in this paper refer to the Maynard News.

Read at March, 1966 meeting of
The Maynard Historical Society

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