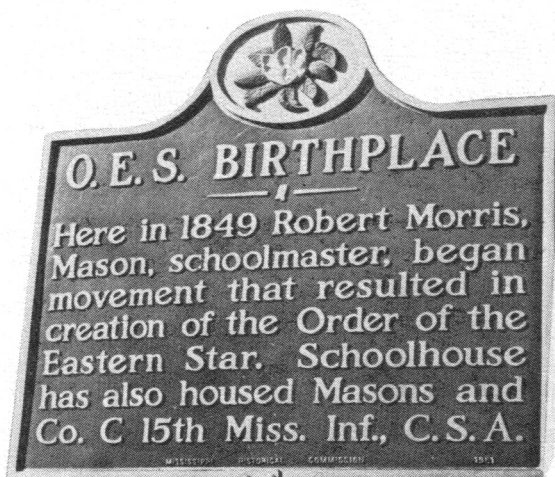
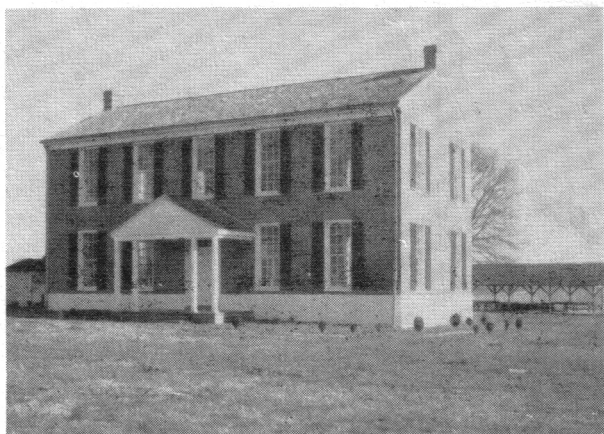


# MISSISSIPPI

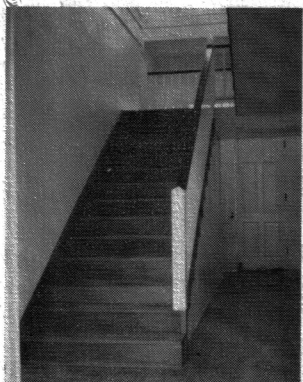


Historical Marker on State Highway 17



ROB MORRIS LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

Richland, Holmes County, Mississippi



Eureka Masonic College, at Richland, Mississippi, now lovingly termed "*The Little Red Schoolhouse*" by Eastern Star members all over the world, is preserved by the Grand Chapter of Mississippi, O.E.S., as a shrine in honor of the Architect and Master Builder of the Order, Dr. Rob Morris, who conceived the idea of the Order while he was serving as the first Principal of the school.

## Stairway to Dormitory

Records now preserved in the Department of Archives and History of Mississippi show that the cornerstone of the building was laid early in October of 1847 with public ceremonies, as a result of donations appropriated for the school: \$400 by the Grand Lodge of Mississippi at its annual session in 1847; \$1500 by Lexington Lodge No. 24 and Lexington R.A. Chapter No. 9, added to the sum originally appropriated by Eureka Lodge No. 61, to make a total amount of \$3,400. It was described as "a handsome brick edifice, 60 by 30 feet, and two stories high." (Freemasons Mon. Mag., December, 1847.)

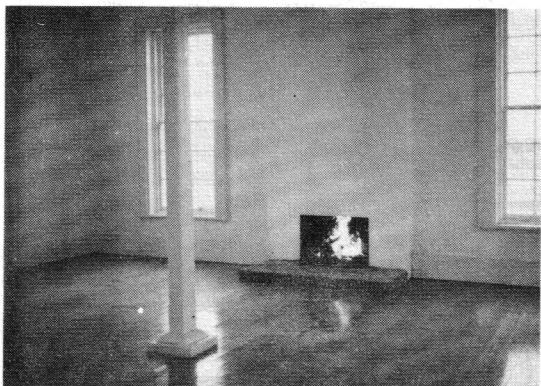
This same publication states that the original name given the school was Richland Literary Institute "now being erected in the flourishing town of Richland, in Mississippi," but on February 7, 1848, by Special Act No. 253 of the Laws of Mississippi, the college was chartered under the name of Eureka Masonic College with the power to confer literary and honorary degrees. (Sec. 1 and Sec. 4, Chapter 253, Laws of Mississippi.) Robert Morris, who had been principal since 1845 of Mount Sylvan Academy, a school established and supported by the Freemasons in Oxford, Mississippi, was secured as the Principal of this new Masonic College.

A report of Eureka Masonic College adopted by the Grand Lodge of Mississippi, as printed in the November, 1848, issue of the Freemasons Monthly Magazine, can be found in the Department of Archives and History of Mississippi.

Mississippians take justifiable pride in the fact that all phases of Rob Morris' great Masonic career were begun in our state, as well as the fact that he was married to Miss Charlotte Mendenhall (May 26, 1841), described as "a daughter of one of the most prominent families in Mississippi." On March 5, 1846, he was initiated into Oxford Lodge No. 33 (All of these dates obtained from *The Eastern Star, The Evolution From a Rite to an Order*, by Harold Van Buren Voorhis) and on July 3, 1846, received his Third Degree from Mr. William H. Stevens,

afterwards Grand Master of Mississippi, whom Dr. Morris described as "a Mason of considerable ability, burning zeal, and a warm advocate of Ladies' Masonry. In 1847, he conferred upon Mrs. Morris and myself the degree of Heroine of Jericho; and from him I acquired my first appetite for this whole system of Adoptive Masonry." (*MASONIC TABLET*, Vol. II, No. 7, November, 1873.)

On October 21, 1848, Rob Morris affiliated with Mount Moriah Lodge No. 86, Black Hawk, and on November 9, 1848, took all degrees of Royal Arch Masonry in Lexington Chapter No. 9, Lexington, Mississippi. On May 26, 1849, he demitted from the Lodge at Black Hawk in order to affiliate with Pearl Lodge No. 23, in Jackson, to which city he had then moved. He was elected secretary of Pearl Lodge in 1850, 1851, and 1852. He served as Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi in 1849 and was reappointed in 1850. The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons also made him Grand Chaplain in 1849. (Harold Van Buren Voorhis.)



West Classroom

In an address at the Grand Chapter of New York, O.E.S., June 4, 1873 (Entire speech printed in the Nov. issue of *MASONIC TABLET*), Bro. Morris stated:

"... From France, Adoptive Masonry was brought to the United States by French officers, it is believed, during the Revolutionary War... In the *Eastern Star Manual*, compiled by Brother McCoy, the statement is made in the preface that, 'The Order of Eastern Star was established in the United States in 1778.' This is an error; it should have read, 'Adoptive Masonry was established at that time...'

"When I began to write and lecture upon Free-masonry, I found this desire for ladies' degrees as deeply planted in the breasts of others as my own, and I was called upon everywhere to confer such degrees as we had, namely — the Good Samaritan, the Heroine of Jericho, the Mason's Daughter, and others. They were all

rather thin – gave but little satisfaction – barren in matter and inartistic in form, and I was convinced that something better could be made . . .

“In 1850, twenty-three years ago, I wrought out with all my ability my idea of what was needed in this department, and called it ‘The Eastern Star’ . . .

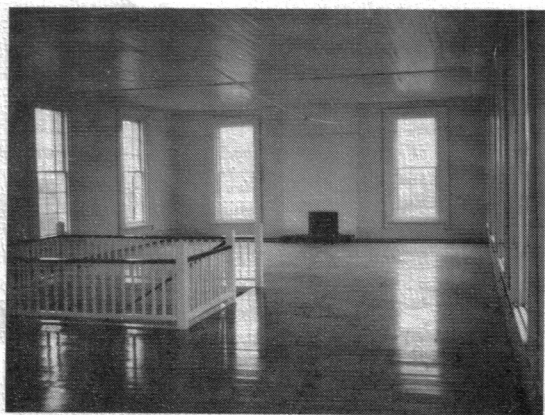
On August 1, 1884, Dr. Morris wrote a “record” of his connection with the Eastern Star under the heading “Origination of the Eastern Star.” (Harold Van Buren Voorhis.) The following statements are excerpts from that record:

“In the winter of 1850 I was a resident of Jackson, Mississippi. (On file in the Department of Archives & History, page 26 of the 1850 Census of Hinds County enumerated the Morris family as the 197th family in the order of visitation, made on August 31, 1850, and listed the following: R. Morris, age 32, born in Mass.; Charlotte Morris, age 32, born in Ala.; John A. Morris, age 7, Charlotte and Alfred, age 3, and Robert, age 1, all born in Mississippi; and Sarah Mendenhall – evidently a sister of Mrs. Morris – age 28, born in Ala.) For some time previous I had contemplated . . . the preparation of a Ritual of Adoptive Masonry . . .

“About the first week of February, 1850, I was laid up for two weeks with a sharp attack of rheumatism, and it was this period which I gave to the work at hand . . .

“So my Ritual was complete, and after touching and retouching the manuscript, as professional authors love to do, I invited a neighboring Mason and his wife to join with my own, and to them, in my own parlor, communicated the Degrees. They were the first recipients . . .”

Mr. Voorhis also quotes Brother Morris in a statement made in 1877: “The degree called the Eastern Star . . . is strictly my own origination. By the aid of my papers, and the memory of Mrs. Morris, I recall even the

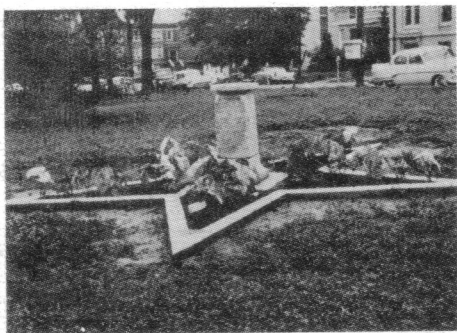


Upstairs Dormitory

trivial occurrences connected with the work — how I hesitated for a theme, how I dallied over a name, how I wrought face to face with the clock that I might keep my drama within due limits of time, etc. The name was first settled upon, the Eastern Star . . .

“I wrote every word of the original lectures and composed the songs. For twenty-eight years I have been communicating it as my own origination. I am the founder of the system, and no one can show any proof of its existence prior to 1849 . . .”

A historical marker, surrounded by a star in concrete, placed in the northeast corner of Smith Park,



## MONUMENT IN SMITH PARK Jackson, Mississippi

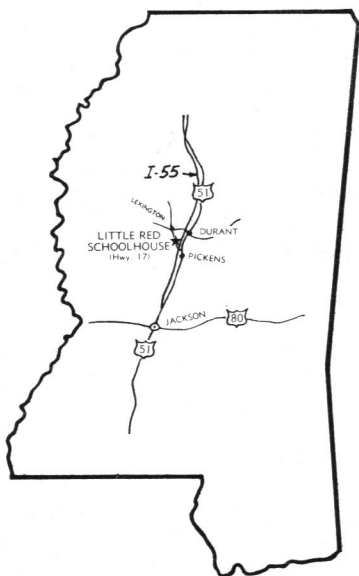
the block directly behind the Governor's Mansion in Jackson, points out the spot on which Dr. Morris' house stood, the spot where the degrees of the Eastern Star were conferred for the first time. It is a generally accepted fact, however, that the Little Red Schoolhouse was the real birthplace of the Order, since the idea of such an organization was conceived in Dr. Morris' mind during his tenure of office there.

The building gains added historical significance by the fact that it was used during the Civil War to house Company C, 15th Mississippi Infantry, one of the first companies organized in the state. The regiment was noted for its heroic service throughout the war, serving in the battles of Fishing Creek, Shiloh, Franklin, and the Atlantic Campaign.

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, on July 6, 1959, for a twenty-five year period. Fruitful efforts on the part of the Board of Trustees ten years later, however, resulted in the passage of a special act of the Mississippi Legislature, which allowed the Grand Chapter of Mississippi to obtain legal title to the property in exchange for an equal, adjacent tract of land. This bill, Senate Bill No. 2205, was signed into law by the Governor of Mississippi on July 4, 1968.

In November, 1970, Eureka Masonic College was accepted for listing in the National Register of Historic Sites. An oil painting of this historic landmark by Bess Dawson, renowned Mississippi artist, is displayed in the State Museum. A picture of this painting is used as the permanent cover design for the Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Mississippi.

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 cyclone fence encloses the property, and rest rooms of red brick have been built. A pavilion, erected in 1962, has been enjoyed by the crowds assembling there in August of each succeeding year for a Festal Day picnic, which attracts hundreds of people from Eastern Star families in Mississippi and many others from neighboring states. Each year during the Grand Chapter session, 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, the Rob Morris Little Red Schoolhouse, Birthplace of the Order of the Eastern Star.



**Little Red Schoolhouse Brochure Committee**

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