



E. H. DORR and THE LEGACY OF YORK, NEBRASKA  
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The central United States of America and particularly Nebraska was settled by men and women of industry, ethics, fortitude and a vision for the future --- and a hope for prosperity for future generations. The town of York, Nebraska, catapulted within a very short time of its settlement into a place of prominence as hub for agriculture, commerce, trade, education and even cultural outlets. It had a several stores, a grain elevator, a school and several colleges including the York Business College and Normal School, which later merged with York College.

York, Nebraska originally had several newspapers and I was amused that looking back in some of the old records the word "Editorial" was spelled {either intentionally or by mistake} "Eddytorial."

The town of York boasted several banks, a post office, and also hospitals at a very early date. It is surprising that, in its earliest years, the town of York had numerous practicing physicians for a town of its size. It was home to several Medical Doctors and Osteopaths. It also had a noted druggist and Pharmacist: Masonic Brother, Companion and Sir Knight Emmet H. Dorr. I have one of Brother Dorr's Masonic "Calling Cards." He died August 6, 1890, so it undoubtedly quite old. According to "the year 1887 City Directory of the town of York, Nebraska," Brother and Sir Knight Emmet Dorr's drug store was located "W side Broadway r 2 blks n 7th and B'dw'y."

Bro.: Emmet H. Dorr served as Worshipful Master of York Masonic Lodge #56 at York, Nebraska during the 1884-1885 term. He was also a Charter Member of Solomon Chapter #33 of Royal Arch Masons, which received its Charter on 16 December 1885. Lastly, he was a Knight Templar in Joppa Commandery #17 also at York. His Masonic "Calling Card" showcases his signature along with a portrait of a Templar astride a horse, carrying shield, sword, and hoisting a Beauceant {or Templar banner} along with an image of a Cross in the Sky above..... with the words: "In Hoc Signo Vinces" {By this Sign, Ye Shall Conquer}.

As a Druggist and Pharmacist: Brother and Sir Knight Emmet H. Dorr was valuable to the entire community of York, Nebraska, and surrounding areas. Just look at our modern world of today: Most of us rely on a pharmacy at one time or another. Some of us depend on the skill of a Pharmacist quite regularly.

Brother Emmet H. Dorr was an early pioneer of York and he died far too soon. It is significant, that within his lifetime and even just a few years later: York, Nebraska became a thriving community. It had a Masonic Hall {where the author James A. Marples was initiated into Holyrood



Council #61 Knight Masons many years ago...for which I am grateful.) That building suffered a devastating fire on October 21, 2006, and thus the ornate old Masonic Lodge Hall no longer exists. To me, it was probably one of the "top 3" as far as the Oldest Masonic Halls I have ever been inside. Likewise, it would probably rank among "the top 5" of most beautiful Masonic Halls that I have ever been inside.

As noted, York, Nebraska had the York Rite Masonic Bodies of which Brother and Sir Knight Dorr was a member.

The town just a few years later, had many other additional civic, fraternal, religious, educational and cultural organizations and venues for activity, which were commonplace in more heavily populated centers such as Omaha, Denver or Chicago ---which made York, Nebraska, a real rarity. Located in the town was an Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge {I.O.O.F. Lodge}, an Opera House; a Modern Woodmen of America Lodge; The Royal Neighbors; the Woodmen of the World; the Knights of the Macabees; a Knights of Pythias Lodge; a Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks Lodge {B.P.O.E.}; Knights & Ladies of Security; Loyal Mystic Legion of America; Royal Highlanders; Ancient Order of United Workmen {A.O.U.W.}; Tribe of Ben Hur; Improved Order of Red Men; Sons of Herman; Lyceum League; Home Forum Benefit Order; Commercial Club; The Women's Club; Amateur Musical Club; American Legion; Y.M.C.A. and a "Business Men's Club of the YMCA.

Brother and Sir Knight E.H. Dorr was a supporter of many of these entities ---even those he was not affiliated with. Many of his customers were members and their children WERE MEMBERS OR PATRONS--- so his zeal in supporting their efforts and his zest in promoting York, Nebraska knew no bounds. He was a friend of William Henry Davis, who was a Past Master of York Masonic Lodge #56 and the other York Rite Bodies. It is said that Bro.: Davis "exemplified the Master Mason's Degree before one of the largest bodies of Masons ever gathered, the event taking place in the Chicago Masonic Temple in 1893."

The first trial in York county was in 1873 and it was not a "white man's trial," but rather an "American Indian Trial." Quickly summarized: The Pawnee Indians knew the concept that marriage was a binding contract. In the winter of 1870 {according to N.A. Dean, who was a friend of Bro.: E. H. Dorr}, Mr. Dean said that the Pawnees' Chief camped on the west side of the Blue River, Section 9, Township 9, Range 1 --- and the custom was that if a young man wanted to marry a young woman, he must pay a "price." It seems a young man fell in love with a young woman who camped at that place. The contract was to be made with the girl's father. Consequently, a contract was made. The price was in ponies and furs. In return, the girl's father presented a gift of a 'whip' made from three strands of rawhide fasted to a handle made from elk prongs. A time for the ceremony was set and everybody was happy --- except for the girl, who objected. She said there was some other young man she liked better. This matter was reported to the Chief who consulted his counselors. (The trial.) They deemed the girl had broken the "contract" and disgraced the Tribe. The Chief ordered that she should accept the marriage. She refused. The young man, the father, the mother, and others failed in their attempts to make her accept. So, the Chief ordered one of the young Indian braves to put a rope around her neck, tie her to a tree, bare her back {shoulders to waist} and give her 10 lashes. It was said that "her screams, so severe was the punishment, could be heard half-a-mile away." Afterward, she ran to the family of a white man and his wife --- who, through an interpreter, induced the girl to go back to the camp where they and others eventually persuaded the young girl to accept the marriage contract. And, after awhile the young couple seemed to enjoy each others' company. And, the next Spring, the young couple left for a new camping area, near Omaha ---- their new home, where they presumably lived happily ever after.

Today, the City of York Nebraska is still prominently known throughout the nation. Located near the junction of U.S. Highway 81 and Interstate I-80, many travelers enjoy the pleasant sight of York's colorful balloon-shaped, bubble-top water-tower. It retains its fine schools, businesses, and is still the home to York College. Although, the old Masonic Hall is gone -- a newer building currently serves as the new Masonic Hall {and the author James A Marples was present for the



building's Dedication Ceremonies on August 5, 2007}. The numerous local newspapers that once existed have evaporated and only the York News -Times still is in operation. Although many of the Churches still exist {perhaps even MORE Churches than existed in Sir Knight Dorr's lifetime}, there are fewer of the civic and fraternal orders in existence now. That leaves Freemasonry with a greater role to play.

I am happy that York Masonic Lodge still exists. It, and the York Rite Bodies, have inspired many good men to become "better men" by joining and learning the valuable precepts that our honorable Fraternity inculcates. I have often said that I have learned some valuable lessons-in-life inside Masonic Halls that I never learned inside the university classroom. The Masonic Lodge is a valuable component of any community and I wish York Masonic Lodge continued success. And, I urge all Masons in Nebraska or wheresoever disbursed to remember fine gentlemen such as Brother, Companion and Sir Knight Emmet H. Dorr. His Masonic "Calling Card" was given to others as an act of friendship and kind remembrance.

We must always be mindful that people and the enterprises that they build do not just exist automatically. They must be cared-for, nurtured, and continually promoted. Just as a farmer carefully and consistently tends his crops; or a gardener carefully tends his or her plants, flowers or lawns... a town and all its components must be supported by what I call "a unique personal touch." That is the "Calling-Card" WE {as Masons} need to leave behind. A sense of "belonging" is fine, but a sense of "serving the Community and each other" is even better, since such gestures are remembered. And, some greater efforts are remembered forever.

Just like the story about the American Indian girl and her 'whipping' near York, Nebraska: It is relevant because it reveals how our cultural norms may have changed dramatically over the past Century-and-a-half, yet the Art of Tactful Communication remains VITAL to existing in our ever-changing world. The modes of communication in York, Nebraska {and elsewhere} have gone from voice to voice messages; to postal letters, to telegraph and ---later radio, telephone, and television. Today, we still have many of the aforementioned devices ---with perhaps the exception of the telegraph; which has been replaced by smart phones, e-mails, Twitter, Facebook, and obvious future modes of what we term "Social Media." Yet, nothing can replace eye-to-eye contact, carefully chosen words, and a handshake. Those attributes transform a VIRTUAL FRIEND into a TRUE BLUE FRIEND.

In my view, we can cherish our "virtual friends" but we need to impart that Blue Lodges foster "True Blue Friends" or "Real Friends". Both types of friendships are to be treasured. However, a physical presence is irreplaceable. It is that one characteristic that makes the Five Points of Fellowship special. A valued friend is "the Mystic Tie that Binds Us as a Brotherhood of Man, under the Fatherhood of God." Let us all: "Remember the Past, but Look to the Future" and govern ourselves accordingly. Let us continue to improve upon the foundation which our pioneer fore bearers laid, so that Peace and Harmony will prevail; and every moral and social Virtue will cement us.

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Sources / References / Exhibits / Recommended Readings:

- Masonic "Calling Card" of Brother and Sir Knight Emmet H..Dorr of York, Nebraska.
- Special thanks to Brother, Companion and Frater Fred O. Wyant, Past Master and a VIII<sup>o</sup> of Nebraska S.R.I.C.F. for looking at York Masonic Lodge Archives and Charters some years ago.
- Archives: Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Nebraska.
- Obituary of Emmet H. Dorr. Deceased August 6, 1890. Printed in newspapers in York, Nebraska and at McCool Junction, Nebraska.



- "B.A. Woods City Directory of York, Nebraska". Compiled by B.A. Wood, York Republican Printers, 1887.
- "York County Nebraska and Its People: Together with a Condensed History of the State." Volume 2.
- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33° and a Knight Templar.
- Archives of The Masonic Grand Lodge of Nebraska. (Grand Secretary's Office told me that even some of THEIR RECORDS have mistakenly spelled Bro.: Emmet H. Dorr's surname as "Door"...so future Scholars should take notice of that.

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