

To Improve and Elevate the Character of Man

Excerpted from writings by Don Smith, PSGM



This year, we celebrate the 185th Anniversary of the establishment of the first successful Odd Fellows Lodge in North America. In 17th century England, it was odd to find people organized for the purpose of giving aid to those in need and of pursuing projects for the benefit of all mankind. Those who belonged to such an organization were called "Odd Fellows." The Odd Fellows are also known as "The Three Link Fraternity" which stands for Friendship, Love and Truth.

The Odd Fellow organization flourished in England during the eighteenth century. In 1803, Thomas Wildey joined Odd Fellows Lodge #17 in London, England. In 1817 he and his wife emigrated to America and found employment. Later, he met John Welch, and found that his new friend had also been a member of the order back in England. After publishing several

notices in the "Baltimore American" to see about interest in starting the order here, three former members – John Duncan, John Cheatham and Richard Rushworth responded. On April 26, 1819, Thomas Wildey and four members of the Order from England instituted Washington Lodge No.1 at the Seven Star Tavern in Baltimore, Maryland. This lodge received its charter from the Manchester Unity of Odd Fellows in England. The Seven Star Tavern stood for many years as the birthplace of one of the greatest fraternal organizations this country had ever known. After the destruction of the Seven Stars, a bronze plaque was erected on the site to commemorate this great event.



Odd Fellowship also became the 1st national fraternity to include both men and women when it adopted the beautiful Rebekah Degree on September 20, 1851. This degree by which



Above: Vice President, Schuyler Colfax, Founder of the Rebekah Degree

Top: James Wildey, Founder of Odd Fellows in the United States
Bottom: Seven Star Tavern

"women" were brought into fellowship with men in the Independent Order of Odd Fellows is based on the teachings found in the Holy Bible. It was written by the Honorable Schuyler Colfax who was Vice President of the United States under Ulysses S. Grant, during the period 1868-1873. It should also be noted that Odd Fellows and Rebekahs were the first fraternal organization to establish homes for our senior members and for orphaned children. These good works and traditions have been passed down from generation to generation.

Save The Date For The San Joaquin County Odd Fellow and Rebekah Picnic!

LODI - Odd Fellow and Rebekah lodges in San Joaquin County are again uniting to sponsor the annual County Picnic for members and prospective members on Sunday, July 18, at Micke Grove Park, located south of Lodi. The activities start at 1 p.m. Vince Belli, Noble Grand of Charity Lodge #6 and Financial Secretary of Scio Lodge #102 in Linden, will again lead the committee in arranging the annual event. Last year nearly 150 members and their families participated in this picnic with Lodi Lodge barbecuing tri tip, providing the beans, hot dogs, etc. and Linden Lodge providing the salad.

Members from other lodges that are not sponsoring the picnic are invited to attend, for a donation, to help cover the expenses for the day. Games and other entertainment will be featured, along with the traditional water balloon fight. Other attractions at Micke Grove include the zoo, Japanese Garden, Playland for the kids and the Historical Museum. So come early and enjoy the park!

A fee of \$4.00 is required for each car entering Micke Grove Park. No fee is required for members of the San Joaquin County Historical Society. Reservations may be made with Vince Belli, phone (209) 887-3881; or Don Smith, phone (209) 8878-3829.