

M-12-41-31

1909-1915

Sellman Lodge of True Reformers  
Big Woods community  
Private

The one story frame lodge hall has since been converted into a handsome dwelling house by descendants of the former members. Like other benefit societies in black communities, this one served the insurance needs of the community, as well as being a community center. None of these early 20th century societies are known to still maintain a lodge.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC The Sellman Lodge of True Reformers

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER North side of Big Woods Rd.

CITY, TOWN

Dickerson

VICINITY OF (Big Woods)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3

STATE

Md.

COUNTY

Montgomery

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	No	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME W.B. and F.F. Bell

Telephone #: 301-972-8048

STREET & NUMBER Big Woods Rd.

CITY, TOWN

Dickerson

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code  
Md. 20753

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Registry of Deeds

Liber #: 953/483

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

County of Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Md.

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

M: 12-42-31

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This one story lodge building has been moved from its original site and was converted into a dwelling and enlarged for the purpose. The owners, William and Florence Bell, recall the original appearance of the lodge and describe it as follows.

It was a small, one story frame building with its south gable end serving as the facade. The roof line was oriented north-south, and the facade faced Big Woods Road. The front door was sheltered by a small vestibule. The building was three bays deep, each bay containing one window with 2 x 2 panes. The building stood on a cement foundation. The frame was covered with German siding, painted white. A brick stove flue was built along the eastern wall. The roof was covered with tin. The grounds around the building were wooded.

The interior consisted of one room downstairs with a stage. There was no upstairs. The walls were sheathed with what William Bell termed "barn siding", known by others as "railroad siding" -- that is, beaded, tongue and groove, manufactured boards. The wooden floor also had tongue and groove boards. Lighting was by kerosene lamps.

The Bells moved the house from its original site in 1949-1950. Bell tried to move the house himself and has provided a description of how houses were moved. He had seen other people moving houses when roads were being widened or for personal preferences and decided to try it himself, rather than tear down the old building.

First he laid the foundation for the house at the new site. Next he felled trees on the property, carried the timbers to a sawmill, and had them cut into 4 x 10's and 2 x 6's. To move the house, he needed about five men to help him. He jacked up the house, freeing it from its original foundation. He constructed a gridiron of the timbers underneath the frame of the house, using the 2 x 6's for the length of the grid and the stronger 4 x 10's as the bottommost skids. These 4 x 10 skids rolled over metal pipes (about 2 inches in diameter) laid on the grounds.

The lowest three or four weatherboards were removed, exposing the frame. Large bolts were attached to the two cornerposts, and a cable run from them to the hitch on the back of his pickup truck. As he pulled the house, the pipes rolled, and as the house passed over one pipe (the last one), it was carried to the front by his assistance, and the process continued. However, he did not have enough power to move the lodge the complete distance, so he hired a professional housemover from Frederick named Kline. He had a large truck with all the equipment and moved the building without difficulty.

Upon arrival at the new foundation, Kline jacked up the house several inches above the level of the foundation. He laid 4 x 12's across the foundation, on which the pipes could roll, and pulled the house onto the new foundation. He then jacked up the house and removed all of the timbers and let the house down into place.

(Continued on Attachment Sheet A)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

M: 12-42-31

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

c. 1909-1915

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This building was the lodge hall of the Sellman Lodge of True Reformers which received this land from A. Clinton Brown and Anna M. Brown in 1909. (Deed 210/209) Later the lodge was reorganized as the Sellman Council No. 940, of the Independent Order of St. Luke, of Montgomery County. Many of the founding families of the post-bellum black community of Big Woods were members of this society. Like the Loving Charity Society of Martinsburg and Jerusalem, and the Odd Fellows Society in White Grounds, this lodge was a benefit society providing for the insurance needs of the community. The attached deed 252/308 gives the names of the reorganized lodge in 1915.

The present occupants are descendants of old families in Montgomery County. Florence Bell is a descendant of the Hacketts and Spencers of Big Woods and her husband's family is from Seneca. His grandfather, John Russell, had a house close to the Seneca Stone Quarry.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Land records, Montgomery County Courthouse, Rockville, Md.  
Deeds 210/209, 252/308.  
Oral interviews, not taped, with Florence and William Bell,  
Big Woods community, June-July, 1979, by George McDaniel.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

George McDaniel and Wesley Stubbs, Research Asst.

ORGANIZATION

Sugarloaf Regional Trails

DATE

STREET &amp; NUMBER

TELEPHONE

301-926-4510

CITY OR TOWN

Dickerson,

STATE  
Md.

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: ~~Maryland Historical Trust  
The ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ House ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ State Circle  
Annapolis ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Maryland 21401  
(301) ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~-1438~~

SUGARLOAF REGIONAL TRAILS  
Box 87, Stronghold  
Dickerson, Md. 20753  
(301) 926-4510

## The Sellman Lodge of True Reformers

The building was altered considerably when it became a dwelling. The one large open room of the lodge was converted into a kitchen, dining room, living room and stair hall and constitutes the main section of the house. For the stairway, Bell removed an oak newel post and bannisters from a house that was being demolished. On the east gable end Bell added a 12' x 14' bedroom, and on the west a 12' x 14' den. He raised the roof to create an upstairs and added two gable dormer windows in the front and one large shed dormer in the back. Bell did all the carpentry work himself. He is a jack-of-all-trades. He is skilled in carpentry, masonry, plasterwork and also operates heavy equipment. As a career, he worked with Montgomery County Board of Education. He and his wife raised two children in this house.



Sullivan Lodge

M-12-42-31

Facade: South length

Big Woods

photo by George McDaniel

8/79



Sellman Lodge

M-12-42-31

Rear length: North

Big Woods

photo by George McDonald

P/79