

The story of the **BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS** is a story that leads from Broadway, New York City, to Main Street, U.S.A. It begins in November of 1867 with the arrival of Charles Algernon Sidney Vivian to the city of New York. He was the 21 year old son of an English clergyman and would do well in America as a singer and entertainer. His lasting fame, however, would be as the founder of the Order of Elks of the United States.

The original group consisted of 17 members, all associated in some way with the theater. They called themselves the Jolly Corks with Vivian as the Exalted Ruler. Selection of a permanent name brought on great debate. Some suggested "Buffaloes" but that was rejected. It was not until some of the Jolly Corks visited Barnum's museum and admired the head of the magnificent Elk that a decision was reached. After a recommendation by the appointed committee, a vote was taken. Seven voted for "Buffaloes" and seven for "Elks." One man switched, and on February 16, 1868 the newly born Order was named "Elks".

Its Social activities and benefit performances increased the popularity of the new Order. Membership grew rapidly. Elks traveling to other cities spread the word of the brotherhood of Elks. Soon there were requests for Elks lodges in cities other than New York. In response to these appeals, the Elks asked the New York State legislature for a charter authorizing the establishment of a Grand Lodge with the power to establish local lodges anywhere in the United States. When the Grand Lodge Charter was issued, the founders then received their first local charter as New York Lodge No. 1 on March 10, 1871.

Over the years the Elks have made a name for themselves in many areas. They built and donated a hospital after WWI that became the first Veterans Hospital in America. General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing was allowed to accept the armistice by President Woodrow Wilson and Pershing chose the 11th day of the 11th month at the 11th hour to accept it. You see, General Pershing was an Elk and he knew what the hour of eleven meant to all Elks. The Elks were very prominent during all conflicts the United States have been engaged. "So long as there are Veterans the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will not Forget them."

The Elks were the first to recognize and celebrate a day for our American Flag. For many years the Elks tried to get the United States government to proclaim a day just for our American Flag. It took another Elk, President Harry S. Truman, to set June 14th as our national Flag Day.

Throughout the course of the Order's history, many celebrities from the entertainment field, business and public service have been Elks. Presidents Warren Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and John Kennedy were all Elks. Former President Gerald Ford was a member of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Lodge, where his father served two terms as Exalted Ruler (Lodge president). Of course, many members of Congress have been Elks, too. Former Speakers of the House Tip O'Neill, Carl Albert, John McCormick and Sam Rayburn all belonged to the fraternity. Former Speaker Tom Foley belongs to Spokane, Washington, Lodge. And the late Hale Boggs of Louisiana was also an Elk.

Although the original Elks were actors and entertainers, members of other professions soon joined the organization. Today's Elks represent just about the full spectrum of occupations in America. Entertainers Lawrence Welk, Will Rogers, Jack Benny and Andy Devine belonged, too. Devine was even Exalted Ruler of San Fernando, California, Lodge. And Clint Eastwood is a member of Monterey, California, Lodge.

From the sports world, the Order has counted among its members the likes of Vince Lombardi, Casey Stengel, Mickey Mantle, Whitey Ford and Jim Finks.

The legacy of Charles Vivian's generosity continues to this day in over 2100 Lodges. As long as there are those who need help, the Elks will be there to give aid and comfort.

The Exalted Ruler

The Exalted Ruler, also known as the E.R., is the President and Executive Officer of the Lodge. The E.R. is responsible for all operations, programs, social quarter activities of the Lodge and presides at each Lodge session. The cardinal principle of this station is Fidelity.

The Esteemed Leading Knight

The Esteemed Leading Knight is the Vice President, second in command and presides in the absence of the Exalted Ruler. The cardinal principle of this station is Charity.

The Esteemed Loyal Knight

The Esteemed Loyal Knight is the third chair officer of the Lodge. The cardinal principle of this station is Justice.

The Esteemed Lecturing Knight

The Esteemed Lecturing Knight is the fourth chair officer of the Lodge. The cardinal principle of this station is Brotherly Love.

The Secretary

The Secretary administers the Lodge business correspondence, membership records, and all matters as directed by the Exalted Ruler.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer maintains the financial records and issues checks from the Lodge.

The Tiler

The Tiler is located outside the Lodge room and is responsible for guarding the door of the Lodge room during the meetings.

The Esquire

The Esquire is the 'Sergeant-At-Arms' and maintains ritual decorum and carries out the orders of the Exalted Ruler.

The Chaplain

The Chaplain delivers the prayers and blessings at all Lodge sessions and services.

The Inner Guard

The Inner Guard is responsible for guarding the inner door of the Lodge at each Lodge meeting.

The Organist

The Organist provides the music prescribed by the rituals of the Order and performs such other duties as assigned.

The Trustees

There are three Trustees in the Lodge. Subject to control by the Lodge, the Board shall have the power to; control the funds, investments and real and personal property of the Lodge, not otherwise provided by law, and collect the income and rents there from and, to execute all leases contracts or other papers when ordered by the Lodge.