

The Many Homes of the Sebring Elks

The following information was taken from the 75-year anniversary article written by Claude Howerton, Past Exalted Ruler, who served for two terms as Exalted Ruler and updated by Diane Morse, Leading Knight

The Sebring Elks began meeting in 1926 with the first meeting place held in a room at the Harder Hall Building. But they soon outgrew the space for meetings and lodge activities. The lodge moved to a rented two-story structure built over Lake Jackson, known as Brewton's Tea Room. Windows opened on all sides of the building allowing breezes from the lake to cool the room, which was fine in the summer but proved to be too much in the winter since no heat was available. Attendance dropped drastically. In early 1928, the lodge moved to the Arrowhead hotel on W. Center St. (the site of Edgewater Condominiums) with the intent of purchasing the property for \$30,000 but negotiations failed and the deal was not consummated. Negotiations to purchase the Masonic Hall were also unsuccessful so the lodge moved back to the Harder Hall Building.

Eventually the lodge purchased the property on the corner of Circle and W. Center St. known as the Tobin Block. This proved to be a good business venture. The upper floor was used for lodge and club functions, and the lower floor was rented for store and office space. The income for this provided funds for the maintenance and expenses as well as paid the mortgage on the property. After the mortgage was paid off 1/3 of the lower floor was converted to lodge and club use. The older members disliked the stairs and there was a lack of parking spaces. Interest and attendance was dropping and the lodge saw the need to purchase a new home for the lodge to grow.

In 1963 serious consideration was given to securing a new lodge home. To fund the purchase, bonds were sold to members to start construction in 1965 and the lodge moved into its sixth home on August 1, 1966. The present lodge was dedicated in March 1967 with GER Raymond Dodson as honored guest. The lodge, having one of the best dining rooms in the area, prospered and was very active. In April 1981, the lodge voted to expand the dining room and make other improvements. Throughout the past 25 years the Sebring Elks suffered some setbacks with maintaining membership growth but in 2026 the lodge is thriving with over 700 members. It is through the hard work and dedication of many hard-working Elk members that we continue to grow and do all we do within the community. We at the lodge are so appreciative of our past faithful members who have made our lodge what we are today. We have lots of work still to do and look forward to what the future holds for us. Thank you to all Elks past and present for setting the vision in a small meeting room in 1927 to the beautiful lodge home we have today on Lake Jackson.