

How it all Began In 1891

In October of 1891, action was taken toward the formation of a local Stockton Lodge. Two committees were appointed one to secure a hall and the other sent east for a Charter. As soon as the hall and Charter were obtained, a delegation of Elks came to Stockton from San Francisco and Oakland to institute the new Lodge. There was a banquet after the ceremony.

Half a hundred jolly good Elks who roam the plains of San Francisco and Oakland arrived here yesterday to institute a Stockton branch of the order, and at night the event was celebrated in great style with a banquet at old Pioneer Hall, at which about a hundred covers were laid. The tastily gotten-up menus gave the following gastronomic program for the evening:

Salad-Chicken and Crab, I. Mayonnaise, Eastern Oysters on the Half shell, Olives, Sarcee's, Canapé de Anchovies, Smoked Tongue Tremolade, Ham a la Gelee, Quail on Timbale ala Elks, Ossel d'Oyneau Farcie, Veal Galantine, Turkey, Cranberry Sauce.

DESSERT

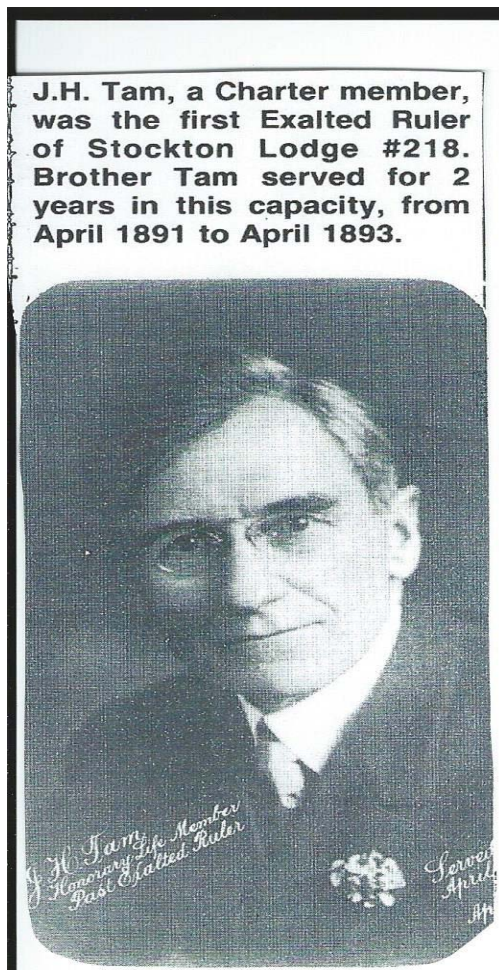
Charlotte Russe, Gateau's Assorted, Fruits, Nuts, Raisins, Coffee

The Stockton Daily Independent ran a major article on November 7, 1891. It reads, in part, as follows: "A Lodge of the Order of Elks will be established here tomorrow. Many prominent citizens will be arriving by special train from San Francisco and Oakland. Among the distinguished visitors are: Warden Hale of San Quentin Prison; Judge Henshaw of Oakland; George E. De Galia, District Deputy of the Order in this State; George Reed, the District Attorney of Alameda; Dr. Crowley, President of the Board of Health; Robert Leckie, County Assessor of Alameda; Robert McKee, an Attorney, and, Dr. Young and Dr. Blood will be in the Oakland representation. Among the gentleman who will come from San Francisco, are; Mr. Morganstern of the Baldwin Theater; J.J. Gottlob, Treasurer of the Bush Street Theater; Rome Harris and James Dunne, all of whom are officers of Lodges. Lawyers, and journalistic people are numerous in the Order of the Elks.

A.W. Stilwell, an officer of San Francisco Lodge, came as Advance Officer to prepare the Lodge for the installation, which took place on November 8, 1891. A committee of the local Lodge met the visitors when they arrived. The train was scheduled to run down on the Weber Avenue track and stop at California Street.

The installation took place at 1:00 o'clock and the interviewing time was made interesting for the gentlemen from the bay. A banquet was spread in the old Pioneer Hall on El Dorado Street and the guests sat down to it at 6:30 o'clock. At 9:00 o'clock, there was a social session in the Native Sons Hall where the installation had been conducted in the afternoon.

Stockton Lodge No, 218 was instituted on November 8, 1891 beginning with 26 members. Oakland Lodge No. 171 organized the Stockton Lodge for this occasion. Out of the Grand Officers appointed, Judge Henry A. Melvin had the honor conferred upon him of participating in the ceremonies as Grand Chaplin. He said, jestingly, "that he believed that his work then has the same thing to do with the santification of the Stockton Lodge.



1892

An expert from the letters of then Secretary GEO. S. Harkness: “As to the material advancement we have a little more than doubled our number – a progress flattering enough when we consider that as many applications have been rejected or withdrawn by their proposers, as have been accepted. We have not endeavored to add a great number to our roll, but have demanded that they be men who appreciate and practice the cardinal virtues of the Elk. We have acted on the principle that a small body of men, imbued with the proper spirit earnest and enthusiastic, is better than a multitude of half-hearted individuals who require a block and tackle to get them into the Order, and after they are in attend meetings. We do not complain at our growth, and are satisfied with our membership. Our rent is paid, our treasurer has not absconded, and we still have a dollar, when needed, for charity”.

One item of interest in the research of Stockton Elks Lodge is that Socials within the Elks were very far and between during this period. When a social did take place it was quite a gala event as evidenced from the following excerpt from “The Weekly Mail Saturday May 14, 1892:

THE WEEKLY MAIL

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1892

THE ELKS' BLOWOUT.

Last Night's Benefit to the Local Lodge.

The Public Entertainment at the Avon Theater—Speeches at the Banquet After the Performance.

Evening Mail, May 7.

The special train bearing the delegations of Elks from San Francisco and Oakland who were to attend the benefit performance of the local lodge last night, was to have reached Stockton at 7:30 o'clock. On it were several of the performers who were to take part in the entertainment. A delegation of Stockton Elks repaired to the depot at halfpast 7 to meet their incoming brethren. A telegram was received announcing that a hot-box had delayed the train and that it would not arrive before 8:05 o'clock. Another telegram received later on announced that the train would not be here until 8:40 o'clock.

In the meantime people were pouring into the Avon theater, where the entertainment was to take place, and shortly after 8 o'clock the lower floor was crowded, the gallery containing a large number also.

The performance did not begin until after 9 o'clock, but the audience was patient, knowing the treat that was in store for them. Taken as a whole it was a most excellent performance for an entertainment of the kind, and all who appeared were people of talent.

The Banquet.

After the performance there was an installation of officers of the Stockton Lodge, and then the Elks repaired to the Commercial hotel, where, with their invited friends, they sat down to banquet. There were about eighty visiting Elks, and they, with the local lodge and the visitors, made a crowd of about 250 people who sat down to the festal board.

Dr. Young, of Oakland Lodge, made an interesting address. Why, he asked, was it that so large a number of men should leave their firesides and journey to Stockton? Not for the pleasure of riding behind a locomotive made slow by a hot-box; not because of the wine and the edibles provided. It was something higher, nobler, greater, that called the lawyer from his brief, the merchant from his countinghouse, the doctor from his practice, the editor from his sanctum; it was the spirit that made the hearts of 30,000 Elks best responsive to one another forming a common union and bond of brother-

hood—the bond that causes Elk to say to Elk as they stand by the open tomb and hear the clod fall, "What shall we do for the widow and the orphan?"

The speaker asked what were the secrets of the order. Some in the hall answered charity, benevolence and so forth, but the speaker said no. The secrets of the order, and the only secrets, were the names of the men who were helped—of the brothers receiving aid. The Elks could face the great Pope and say there was a secret, but could tell what the secret was.

When thinking of the possibilities of sickness, the speaker continued, and of lying on his back, with his family suffering for necessities, it touched his heart to think that if he appealed for aid his feelings would be saved. No one would know that he was the recipient of charity from any man.

Past Exalted Ruler Ernest Ulman, of Golden Gate Lodge, being called on, said that the preceding speakers had enlightened those present on the beauties of the order, and he could only re-echo the sentiments. He hoped that some day all the Elks of the State would meet in a reunion.

The toast "Our Absent Brother," was responded to by George De-Golis, and after it was drank the guests abandoned the tables and, gathering at one end of the dining-hall, where a piano had been placed, enjoyed themselves with song and story until 4 o'clock, when the special train returned to San Francisco.



1900

Now in the years that followed the B.P.O.E. in Stockton prospered with its array of members. They decided they needed to look for more adequate facilities. In their search they acquired the Mail Building on Sutter Street, which they shared with the Native Sons. This was a good arrangement at the time as many Elks were native sons.

The Stockton Daily Independent on February 22, 1900 ran the following headline:

DEDICATION OF THE ELKS' NEW HOME

**Jolity, Song and Eloquence
Marked the Ceremonial
Observance of the
Lodge Last Evening.**

The new home of the Stockton Lodge No. 218, B.P.O.E. in the Mail Building on Sutter Street was dedicated last evening with appropriate ceremonies and the occasion will long be remembered by not only members of the local Lodge, but a large number of visitors who came from the various cities in Northern California to witness the affair.

The noon train yesterday brought the first delegation from Sacramento and then evening train from the bay was simply loaded down with Elks. E.R. G.W. Reed of Oakland Lodge made an eloquent presentation speech later in the evening and referred to the time that his Lodge had instituted the one in this city nine years ago.

Shortly after 8 o'clock the Elks commenced to assemble at the Lodge rooms which were very much admired by the visitors. The members of the Stockton Lodge were justly proud of their new quarters as they are the most elaborate in the west.

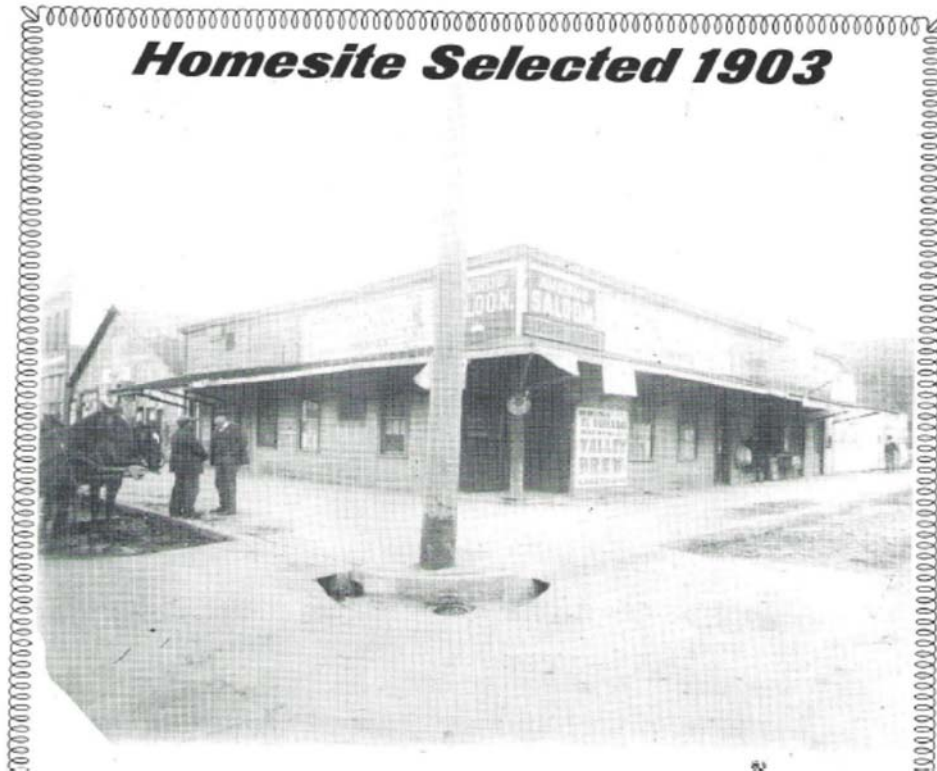
When the mail building was constructed the rooms were built according to the plans and specifications passed upon by the Elks and nothing that would add to the beauty and convenience of the quarters were omitted.

With ceremonies both fitting and pleasing and with entertaining speech and song and music, the new Lodge rooms of Stockton Lodge No, 218 B.P.O.E. in the Mail Building were dedicated last evening, February 21, 1900. The Ceremony was performed by District Deputy F.L. Gray of Sacramento Lodge, assisted by the Officers of Stockton Lodge. Amidst elegant furnishing and exquisite decorating, the ceremony was performed. It was beautiful and impressive and strictly accordance with the ritual of the Order.



Mail Building

1903

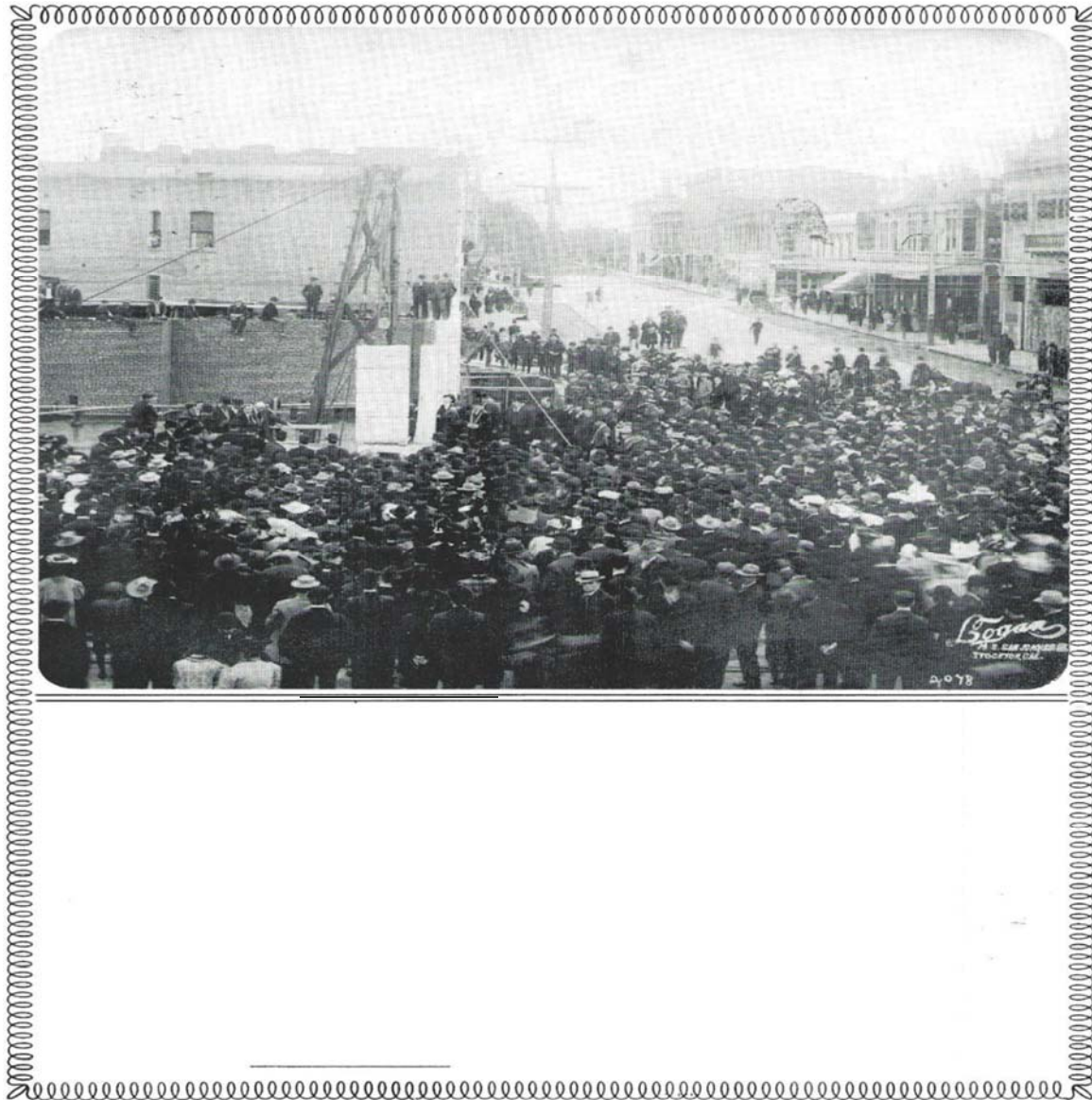


Corner of Sutter Street and Weber Avenue
Stockton Daily Independent March 19, 1907

CORNERSTONE OF ELKS BUILDING OFFICIALLY LAID
Grand Exalted Ruler Melvin Deleivered a Most Interesting Address After
the Ceremionies Were Completed

Cornerstone of Elks Building Officially Laid
The beautiful sentiments expressed in the impressive ceremonies held last Sunday afternoon when Stockton Lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks laid the cornerstone of their handsome new home on the corner of Weber Avenue and Sutter Streets. The air was balmy and so delightful that the officiating Elks

bared their heads throughout the ceremonies without discomfort. Standing on a platform that had been erected for the ceremonies, Exalted Ruler Robert Inglis laid the cornerstone, a massive granite block weighing two and a half tons, over a copper box in which were placed records that will be of great interest to the people who will in future years open the receptable



Stockton Daily Independent October 21, 1908

DEDICATION OF NEW QUARTERS

It was decided last evening at the meeting of the Elk's Lodge that the new building would be occupied on the evening of Tuesday, November 3rd, election night, for the first time and that the dedication ceremonies would be held on November 25th. Extensive preparations will be made for the occasion as well as the ladies night, which will probably be held on the evening of November 20th, though that date has not positively been selected. The members propose giving their lady friends an opportunity of seeing the handsome new quarters prior to the dedication. The decoration and furnishings of the rooms are well under way and when completed the new quarters will be the finest in the west.

Stockton Daily Independent October 28, 1908

LAST MEETING IN OLD ROOMS

Stockton Lodge of Elks has held its last meeting in the old lodge rooms in the Mail building. Last evening after the usual business session a social hour was passed whining the old walls and gaiety and good cheer marked the too rapidly fleeting closing moments. Justice Melvin of the Sacramento Court of California and Past Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks was the guest of the evening, having been persuaded to delay his return to San Francisco last evening by local brother Elks. During the session Past Exalted Ruler of the Stockton Lodge W.B. Nutter delivered addresses which recalled memories and reminiscences of the past mingled with sorrow and joy. The next meeting of the Lodge will be held in the new building erected by the Stockton Lodge and the session will be the most noteworthy ever held under the auspices of the local lodge.

ELKS' ANNIVERSARY DATES FROM TONIGHT

Merchants Decorate in Honor of
Lodge--Henry A. Melvin Coming--
Dedication, Parade and
Music Tonight

This city practically belongs to the Elks, who, at 9 o'clock tonight, with the assistance of bands and 2000 or 3000 visiting Elks and a corps of grand officers, will dedicate their great and handsome lodge room to not altogether the Elks of Stockton, but every Elk in the world who, like some exile, ventures to wander to the Gateway City.

All men who own stores are not necessarily Elks, yet it became noticeable yesterday afternoon that the merchants, the one who make merely wages behind his counter and the one who finds time only to count his gold in the shadow of some desk, joined hands in paying an unsolicited and honorable tribute to

the Order of Elks, by decorating the one his small yet best, and the other his largest show windows with the purple and white, emblematic of Elks from the inception of their order.

AN UNUSUAL EVENT.

Today will be as gala a day in Stockton as undoubtedly any other day when the anniversary of some great event in history hold the ears and patience of thousands. Undoubtedly from morn until evening each train will bring to Stockton its share of Elks. New faces will accumulate with rapidity until the people will observe that Elkdom is something more than just fraternity—it is the quintessence of good fellowship.

Elks Building Dedicated April 2, 1909



OVER THOUSAND ELKS FROM THE VALLEYS AND BAY AID IN LOCAL ELKS' DEDICATION

Spirits of the Elks

Last night was one of rejoicing, not altogether for Elks, but for all who witnessed the dedication of a building which to speak in actual figures cost the Elks of Stockton alone just \$182,500 in its construction.

The Dedication

Richard Lauxen, at the conclusion of this impressive and important ceremony, presented the keys of the building to the exalted ruler, who in turn handed them to D.A. Guernsey, a trustee of the lodge, at the same time saying the ritualistic words which dedicated the building in the name of four virtues Elks call their own. In this simple manner the handsomely dressed walls, chiseled chairs, polished wainscoting, carpets from Europe's best looms, the great central dome of colored glass, the draperies, the nation's best gift to the

public, these and more were dedicated to the use of Stockton Lodge of Elks, No. 218.

Gifts Music

After this, many brilliant little speeches were made by the exalted rulers of the various lodges attending the dedication. Judge McLaughlin in magic words brought to Stockton Lodge an invisible token of regard, that of love, one of the greatest virtues, the order of Elks can send to its brothers.

Another costly present was made by the San Francisco Lodge of Elks, No. 3, in a costly and richly cut two-piece punch bowl, with ladle and cups.

Santa Rosa Lodge, No. 646, delivered to the lodge a beautiful painting with the words "Fraternal Greeting. On you may the bright light of prosperity forever shine."

In like manner did Berkeley Lodge, No. 1002, present to Stockton Lodge a beautiful oil painting.

Sacramento Lodge made a gift to the lodge of a richly carved mahogany chair.

Alameda Lodge also remembered the cordiality of the Stockton Lodge.

Reminiscences

Henry A. Melvin of Oakland Lodge, Past Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks Lodges, spoke beautifully of "Oakland's baby lodge." That was Stockton Lodge. First, Oakland built a temple dedicated to Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity. Sacramento followed in line, surpassing in many respects the supposed unsurpassable beauties of the former home of Elks, and now it comes to pass that Stockton unsuspectingly, and within a comparatively short period, Stockton, the baby lodge, had surpassed them all with a lodge room and retiring rooms which will be a marvel to the wandering Elk and forever stand as a great monument to the order of Elks.

He closed in beautiful, inspiring words, hoping the spiritual grace would be Stockton Lodge's blessing. His last words were, "May the Lord bless and keep you, and shed upon you the light of His countenance."

Stained Glass Dome Located in Lodge Room

One of two Stained Glass Domes located in new Lodge. Smaller dome was not as elaborate as this large one which measured 30 feet in diameter. Proclaimed to be one of the finest works of art glass in America. The glass domes were built by the San Francisco Art Glass Company in 1908. Glass dome now belongs to the Hard Rock Café in San Diego.



Special Elks Hall Board Meeting May 19, 1975 concerning domes and stained glass windows:

(This excerpt was taken from the official minutes of the Elks Hall Association May 19th 1975)

Since the Lodge has insufficient Funds to remove the large dome and ten stained glass windows and that time has run out and Walters desires to save the dome, he proposed:

1. Walters would form a group made up of James Lloyd, E. Ernest, Al Freitas and himself who would finance the removal.
2. The lodge to select the windows they desired to use in the new facility
3. The dome and panels would be warehoused for 2 years during which period of time the Lodge could purchase them at actual cost per square inch to remove and package
4. All remaining items would become the property of the group if they did not purchase any portion within the 2 year period of time.

ELKS GLASS DOME – LOST TREASURE – By Pat Donahue of The Record Staff

"Most in stockton never saw Italian-crafted stained glass dome that capped the downtown Elks Building. But some of those who did called the 25 foot diameter artifact : the crown jewel of Stockton" And those that remember the picturesque skylight say its beauty "astnished " club members and guests alike at meetings and social events.

The dome is gone now – sold at a SanDiego auction earlier this month for \$90,000. For almost 70 years it had graced the fourth floor lodge room that opened to the fifth and top floor ball room.

Only club members and their guests saw what the Southern California auctioneer called "finest piece of Americana I have ever handled". "Only a few people knew about it. Says local historian Raymond Hillman. The pity now, he says is that if the dome had stayed (in the Elks Building) it would have become a public access room under parking district ownership.

The sale in San Diego meant nearly a \$30,000 profit for a Lodi couple and Sacramento antique dealer who bought the dome for \$16,000 through a Stockton restaurateur. He has been among four partners who removed it, before taxpayers money bought the building in 1975 for \$70,000 – ostensibly for use as a parking lot.

The parking lot was never built. And the building has been sold for \$126,000 to an investment company. Some say no one care enough to see that the dome remained a part of Stockton's art legacy. Others say they thought it was in someone's safe keeping never considering it might be sold to the highest bidder. And there are others who question the city should have allowed a partnership of four men to strip the building at Weber Avenue and Sutter Street of the dome and other valuable antique fittings before the five story structure came into public ownership in the 1975 sale. The dome's auction block fate opened an old wound as the news circulated among some members of the downtown business community and people committed to historical preservation.

For it recalled a dispute four years ago over who actually owned the dome and its companion – a smaller dome located at Alberts Steakhouse. Both were removed from the Elks Clubhouse as part of a pre-sales agreement between the Elks and the Central Parking District of Stockton. It called for the removal of a number of artifacts, enumerated prior to the sale,

They included the domes, stained glass windows, fans and light fixtures, among others. Edmund Coy director of the parking district, says a “verbal agreement he made with Henry Wolters representing the Elks Club allowed the Elks to remove “anything as long as they incorporated it in their new building. That’s, says Coy, precluded the Elks from taking either dome since neither was used in the remodeling project at their new headquarters, a motel called the Ranch, north of Stockton. In effect, the district or the city of Stockton which established the district, is the moral if not legal owner, Coy says.

He admits the sales agreement did not specifically include the provision negotiated with Wolters and blames the Stockton city attorney’s office for the mistake. But Paul Mordy, then assistant city attorney and now in a similar post in Southern California, says he has no recollection of a “verbal agreement and wrote the sale documents to reflect what had been negotiated.

Wolters denies there was any such agreement, saying “the Lodge or myself did nothing to violate an agreement, written or oral. Wolters and three others eventually became the owners of the dome by paying the cost of having it removed from the Elks Building that came to \$14,000. The Elks received nothing for the larger dome but did sell the smaller one to restaurateur Al Freitas for \$800, according to Wolters Freitas was one of Wolters three partners in acquiring the larger dome. Wolters won’t say who the other two were.

They kept the larger dome stored in boxes for several years and finally sold it in January, after giving the Elks Club the opportunity to buy it at a price that just allowed the group to recover its initial cost. The selling price was \$16,000 the new owners were Bobbi and Byng Forsberg of Lodi and Sam Gordon of Sacramento all antique collectors and sellers. The Forsbergs heard about the dome from Freitas owner of Albert’s Restaurant. They had admired the dome hanging over the restaurant’s bar and were told a larger, more beautiful one might be available. They told Gordon about it, and through him. Contacted John P Wilson owner of the Golden Movement Emporium auction house near Los Angeles. \$16,000 investment

The decision was made to acquire the piece and negotiations began. The price came down from \$20,000 to \$16,000 and the Forsbergs and Gordon bought the dome, unseen, In fact, Mrs Forsberg says she did not see the dome until the auction after it had been restored at a cost of \$20,000 which came out of Wilson’s 50 percent consignment fee The Forsbergs and Gordon received half of the \$90,000 auction price on their four month old \$16,000 investment. Mrs Forsberg says they’ll probably invest their profit in the antique business.

Although they’ve been buying restoring and selling antiques for several years, the purchase of the dome “was the first time we bought anything on speculation” specifically to turn over a quick profit. It probably won’t be the last she says. It was after all, a successful venture from a private

investment viewpoint. But it remains a painful loss to Hillman, who still believes that even under private ownership, arrangements would have been made for the public to visit the lodge room if it still housed the stained glass dome.

As for the San Diego collector who bought the dome, planning to install it in a discotheque, he discovered it was too wide.

So for now the fate of Stockton's crown jewel is anybody's guess.

NOTE: The dome is currently located in the Hard Rock Café in San Diego

STOCKTON DAILY INDEPENDENT
AUGUST 11, 1912.

HUNDREDS OF ELKS WERE HERE

Class of 20 Initiated Into Modesto
Lodge By Local Officers and
Banquet Followed Ceremony

Over 500 Elks, from Modesto, Stockton and nearly every city and town in the valley and about the bay, were the guests last evening of Stockton Lodge No. 218, at their lodge and club rooms to witness the initiation of 20 candidates into the newly instituted Modesto lodge.

STOCKTON DAILY INDEPENDENT
JANUARY 3, 1913.

STOCKTON LODGE SECURES LARGE ELK

Stockton Elks are to have in their lodge rooms one of the finest specimens of mounted elk in the world, in fact, a specimen that is surpassed only by the one in the London museum, and which was purchased by the museum authorities for \$2000.

The elk was shipped by the California Transportation company, and is so large that it could not be taken through the door of one of the river steamers. Accordingly, it was lashed in place on the forward deck and covered with tarpaulin.

The animal was 12 years old when killed and should have weighed about 1600 pounds. From hoof to shoulder blade it is nearly six feet, and from hoof to the highest point of its antlers, which are six pointed, the measurement is more than ten feet. The head is one of the finest ever exhibited on this coast.



