

On January 25th, 1895 Covington Elks Lodge was established with 32 charter members. The initial meeting was conducted in Hermes Hall at the north east corner of 4th and Court Street.

On July 11th, 1895 the Lodge was granted its charter under the guidance of Grand Exalted Ruler William G. Meyers and later that year in December, a permanent hall for the Lodge was acquired on the third floor of the First National Bank building located on the West side of Madison Avenue between 4th and 5th Street. Mr. Maurice J. Richmond served as the first Exalted Ruler and Ben Adams was appointed the first Secretary. The first elected offices were: Harvey Meyers, Exalted Ruler, Ben Adams, Secretary and Harry Holtrup, Treasure.

In 1905 the Lodge purchased the Homer Hudson residence on the north side of 5th Street. The home was completely remodeled and a large hall and kitchen was constructed as an addition to the rear of the building. The dedication of the new Lodge was held on March 7, 1905. J.J. Fitzgerald, a past Exalted Ruler from Louisville Lodge #8, presented the main address, Elks from Cincinnati #5, Newport #273 and member from around the commonwealth attended the festivities.

The first member to serve as State President from Lodge 314 was M.T. Shine in 1912-1913. The first District Deputy appointed by the Grand Lodge was R.T. VonHoene, appointed in 1927-1928.

The flood of 1937 totally covered the building, the old Hudson residence and hall was destroyed and was demolished in 1937. A new facility was constructed and on January 31, 1938 a new building made of brick and featured Classical Revival detailing with a new meeting room, a large banquet hall and kitchen was dedicated.

The 1940s were very busy years for the Lodge and in 1940 the Lodge hosted the Kentucky Elks State Convention in their new building. J.P Smith became the fourth member of the Lodge to serve as State President and took office in 1941-1942.

During the Second World War, 44 members of the Lodge served in the armed forces. Two of these members, G. Gibson and Eugene G. Finke Jr., made the supreme sacrifice. In 1949 the Lodge was severely damaged by fire. The members acted quickly and a new facility was constructed and still stands today on 5th Street in downtown Covington.

During the last part of the 1940s and thru the 1950s the Lodge grew to over 800 members. It was where everyone wanted to be on a Saturday evening enjoying dinner, drinks and dancing.

During the 1960s and 1970s as members started moving from downtown to the suburb's, the members dropped to 171 and it became apparent that the Lodge needed to move from downtown and relocate to the suburb's as well. In 1979 the Lodge was sold to the Northern Kentucky Senior Citizens and 35 Acres was purchased in Burlington, Kentucky with the hope of building a new Lodge building with a swimming pool and recreational area for its members. Lodge meeting during this period of time was held at the Coach and Four Restaurant for a while and later on at Newport Lodge #273. This move ended 89 years of serving the Covington Community on 5th Street.

From 1979 to 1981 membership had fallen to less than 100 and the Lodge needed a new home. In early 1981 a new 3,000 square building was built and from 1981 through the early 1990s the lodge prospered and grew in its new location. In late 1993 and through 1994 the greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky airport began purchasing land in the surrounding communities and left the Lodge in a rural area with no hope of survival. In late July of 1994 a special meeting was held by Special Deputy Garland Guilfoyle, at that meeting the lodge voted to surrender their Charter back to the Grand Lodge.

However In August of 1994 at the Mid- Year Convention, it was determined that the property in Boone County would be sold. The name of the Lodge would be changed from Covington to Florence and be relocated. Under the guidance of the Lodge Sponsor Past Grand Exalted Ruler Ted Hess, and the hard work and dedication of one member James Mirick, the process of selling the property and relocating to Florence began. At the Grand Lodge Convention on July 11, 1995 in New Orleans, Louisiana, the name of the Lodge was officialy changed to Florence ending 100 years as Covington Lodge 314.

During the 100 years of existence, Covington Lodge had 11 State Presidents and 9 District Deputies, hosted 10 State Conventions and numerous District Deputy Clinics. The First State President served in 1912, M.T. Shine, the Last one served in 1986, George Henry Albrink. The first District Deputy served in 1927, R.T. Vonhoene, the last one served in 1994, James Mirick.

FLORENCE LODGE 314

In August of 1995 Florence Lodge held its first meeting renting the back hall of the American Legion post on US 42. There were 11 members present with 44 paid members on the roster. During that meeting, Billy Ray Wilkinson, was elected Exalted Ruler, James Mirick elected Secretary, and Charles Murry elected Treasurer.

The Lodge continued to meet at the American Legion Post for a Period of about six Months, during that time the Lodge began to grow and new members where elected to fill the vacant officers.

In Early 1997 the Lodge rented a facility at 225 Main Street where they continued to grow and participate in local and State programs. In December of 1997 the Lodge purchased a 6,000 sq. foot two story building on 1.25 acres located at 7704 Dixie Highway in Florence, Kentucky and began remodeling for a new Lodge Building. In February of 1998 member James Mirick was elected 3rd. Vice President of the Kentucky Elks Associations and May of that year the Lodge moved into the upper level of their new home and began meeting and holding social functions.

In August of 1999 the new facility was dedicated with members from around the State and Grand Lodge in attendance. In 2001, the Lodge Purchased the 3/4 acre vacant lot next to the building giving them 2 acres of property and much needed parking and part of the lower level was remodeled for a members lounge.

From 1995 to present day the Lodge has been involved in our local community with Programs such as Boone County Adult Education, the USO at the Northern Kentucky Airport, the Mary Rose Mission, (after school program feeding children), Angle Christmas Tree for children, The He, She dance helping Kids with Cancer attend summer camp, Fishing derby and cook out for the Boys Home, Hosting the taste of Boone County which supports our State Major Project, Wounded Warrior Program, Purple Hearts and Hero's, Saint Vincent DePaul clothing drive. Various Grand Lodge Programs like Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot, Drug Awareness, Red Ribbon week, Dictionary Program, Scholarships, Veterans (hosting them for the annual Army/Navy game with Christmas gifts), Essay Contest, Mother's day brunch, also helping the community by donating thousands and thousands of Dollars to help those in need and countless number of volunteer hours supporting all these programs.

Also in 1995, Marilyn Mirick, Mae Kloecker and (with the help of Daisy Napier from Newport Lodge 273), a Ladies Auxiliary was formed. In 1996 Barb Wilkinson became the first President of the Ladies Auxiliary. Today it is known as the Lodge Auxiliary and continues to support the Lodge with its worthwhile programs hosting our Tuesday night dinner and Valentine's dance along with other function throughout the year.

Under the Guidance of Rex Timmons, Tim Gentry and with the help of several other members, the lodge created the Elk Riders, (the first of its kind to be recognized by the Grand Lodge), raising money to help our chartable cause by sponsoring Motorcycle rides and also helping other Motorcycle clubs as well.

The Lodge has many members serving on various State committees. Been recognized over the past 22 years for its outstanding participation in our State Association winning the distinguished award Lodge of the year several times, received numerous awards from the Grand Lodge for participating in many Grand Lodge contests, and for Its outstanding Achievements, Has had members appointed to Grand Lodge Committee's. One State President, James Mirick, serving in 2002, Two Vice Presidents, Billy Ray Wilkinson, elected third Vice President in 2008 and moved to second Vice President before passing away in 2009. Jesse Shipp elected to third Vice President in 2016 and will become State President in 2020. Three District Deputy's, Billy Ray Wilkinson in 2000, Jesse Shipp in 2009 and Steve Woods in 2012 and Fourteen Exalted Rulers.

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