

History of Elks Lodge #9 – St. Louis, MO

On an unknown date in early 1878, at an unknown building at the corner of 10th and Pine, the St Louis Elks Lodge #9 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks (officially known as BPOE 9, St. Louis, Missouri) was deemed to have originated. As recorded in the minutes of the 14th regular communication and the 13th session of the December 8, 1878 Grand Lodge held in New York, Exalted Grand Ruler (as our now Grand Exalted Ruler was once called), Frank Girard noted the granted dispensation to St. Louis Lodge #9 (“Lodge #9”) earlier that year on May 1st.

On May 28, 1878, a special meeting (also noted as its inaugural meeting) of St. Louis Lodge #9 was held at St. Louis’ Olympic Theater (on the southeast corner of 9th and Washington) by virtue of the power conferred on the following devote elders in good standing of the Chicago Elks Lodge #4 (District Deputy Exalted Grand Ruler Joseph Mackin, Simon Quinline, Charles Davis, John Jeffrey, Bliss Whitaker, William Allen, John Corbin, William Leonard and John Allen), per the Constitution and general laws of the order to work under dispensation and to hold regular communications in the city of St. Louis, Mo until such time as the Grand Lodge of the Order in New York grants a regular charter. The only business attended to at the May 28, 1878 Special Meeting of St. Louis Lodge #9 was the initiation of the first five members of St. Louis Lodge #9. In order of initiation and St. Louis Lodge #9-member number, the inductees were P. Short (Theater Treasurer, age 29, born in Ireland), Thomas Garrett (Doctor, aged 37, born in Pennsylvania), T. Noxon (Scene Artist, age 46, born in Montreal), W. D. Wetherell (Railroad Agent, age 36, born in Ohio) and Charles Ware (Printer - Publisher, age 28, born in St. Louis). On May 29th, at a second Special Meeting of St. Louis Lodge #9, again held at Olympic Theater, an additional nine members were initiated and between May 31 and June 2, 1878, another 15 members came aboard, bringing the total St. Louis Lodge #9 membership to 29.

On June 2, 1878 St. Louis Lodge #9 held its first Regular Meeting (officially called Regular Communications). Minutes of the meeting referred to it being the first meeting in “their (own) lodge room.” This lodge room was at Druid’s Hall, at the corner of 6th and Walnut. This location would be the first of numerous rented or leased official locations of St. Louis Lodge #9. At the June 2nd meeting of St. Louis Lodge #9, lodge members nominated and elected the first local officers of St. Louis Lodge #9. Additional officers were appointed. District Deputy Exalted Grand Ruler performed the installation ritual of Thomas Garrett (Exalted Ruler), E. W. Jameson (Leading Knight), J. A. Robertson (Loyal Knight), W. D. Wetherell (Lecturer), P. Short (Secretary), Charles A. Spaulding (Treasurer), Charles Creighton (Tiler), J. W. Parle (Inner Guard), C. E. Ware (Chaplin), and J. A. Griswold, C. A. Fowler and T. F. McGovern (as Board of Trustees).

In all, Lodge #9 initiated sixty-three members in 1878. Each paid an initiation fee of \$5.00. By 1880, membership in Lodge #9 was approaching 100 and by June of 1881, the Lodge was initiating it's 250th member.

In 1878, the Exalted Grand Ruler of The Order was obligated to visit each lodge once a year and to make a report of such visits at the Grand Lodge. EGR Frank Girard made his visit to the new St Louis Lodge #9 on August 25, 1878 and reported at the December 8, 1878 Grand Lodge accordingly: "I visited this lodge (St. Louis #9) on August 25th, 1878 and found a splendid body of men". This lodge is well officered and in most excellent condition. I installed the lodge and officers under dispensation, exemplified the Work, gave such information as they desired, and am satisfied that they will prove themselves in every way worthy to be ranked among the foremost lodges of the country. Their officers are composed of representative men of the city, and I firmly believe that they will succeed in establishing the lodge as a recognized institution of their city." In attendance to hear the report and witness all other proceedings of the 1878 Grand Lodge were St Louis #9's Exalted Ruler Thomas Garrett, Esteemed Leading Knight Edward Jameson, Esteemed Loyal Knight Joseph Robertson, Grand Lecturer W. D. Wetherill, Secretary Patrick Short, and Treasurer Chas A. Spaulding.

Several years prior to the charter granting of St Louis Lodge #9, an acting tour took a future St Louis Lodge #9 member William J Florence to a party hosted by an Arabic diplomat which led to an invitation to join a secret society. The introduction to that secret society led Florence and friend Walter M Fleming to find and establish a fraternity in 1870, based upon fun and fellowship. Formerly called The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of The Mystic Shrine, the fraternity is now known as The Shriners. The fraternity's first Imperial Potentate was #9's William J Florence.

The origins of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks lies with a Charles Vivian led group of New York City professional and semi-professional entertainers that loved to gather in near-by taverns (or a near-by boarding house on dry Sundays), tricking new acquaintances into buying a round of drinks. The means of tricking unsuspecting new acquaintances involved a cork game and thus the group of entertainers soon became known as the Jolly Corks. Following the death of one of the Jolly Corks, it was decided that a more noble cause of association was appropriate. Therefore, at the February 2, 1868 meeting of the Jolly Corks (at 17 Delancey St in NYC), Charles Vivian proposed that the Jolly Corks become organized as a lodge along the lines of a benevolent and fraternal society. A committee was formed to propose rules for the new organization and a name. To the disappointment of some members who came to American from England (and wanted to pay reference to England's Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalo), the committee recommended the name Elk as "a distinctly American animal that is described as being fleet of foot, timorous of doing wrong, but ever constant in defense of self or of the female of his species." On February 16th, 1868, by a vote of 7 to 5 or 8 to 7 (the records were lost in a fire), the members of the new lodge became

known as Elks as opposed to Buffalos (Fred Flintstone and Barney Rebel, in reverence to that vote, belong to the Water Buffalos).

In Elks lore, Charles Vivian is recognized as the Elks founding father and February 16, 1868 is recognized as the Elks birthdate. Ten years after his 1880 death in Leadville, Co, Boston Elks Lodge #10, brought Vivian's remains back to Mt Hope Cemetery in Boston so that Charles could eternally rest at the home of Lodge #10's Elk Rest.

Ironically, Vivian never claimed to be an Elk although he liked to tell friends that he helped organize The Order. Accordingly, to BPOE legend, it took but a few months for the first lodge feud of consequence to develop. On one side of the feud were The Order's legitimate actors and entertainers who wished to stay true to benevolent and fraternal principals while the other side, led by Vivian, were far more interested in maintaining the frolicking nature of the original Jolly Corks. The feud came to a head on June 14, 1868 when the "majority legitimate actors and entertainers" called for a Vivian vote of confidence (technically "Vivian's second degree vote") which easily failed when Vivian's "Jolly Cork faction" was barred from the meeting and denied their ability to vote. Thereafter, Vivian never again associated himself with The Elks and in time, the members of his faction were expelled from The Order.

The History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks opinions: "Although there is a fairly accurate account of this conflict in the Elk history books it is hard to get a true feeling of the controversy, not having been there. While there is a tendency to be sympathetic to Charlie Vivian and his close friends one would have to wonder what The Order would be like today if Charlie had been elected on that May night and he and his friends never expelled. When Charlie's friends were denied admission to the meeting, they were told that only professional type people were allowed, and they were undesirable. This makes one wonder what the differences between professionals and undesirables were in 1868.

It is reasonable to suspect and conclude, reading between the lines in the Elks history, that 22-year-old Charles Vivian and his close friends were heavy drinkers that liked to party. Even though they were responsible for the start of the BPOE, it is thought by many that it was probably best that the starting days of The Order were left in the hands of the professionals of the day.

At any rate, in 1893 the Grand Lodge addressed the so-called expulsion of Charles Vivian and the others as illegal and void. After the order rectified this illegal act, a controversy arose as to whether Vivian was the founder of The Order. In 1897, a formal inquiry firmly established his right to this honored title."

As actors and entertainers, the early traveling members of The Elks talked about their new organization with pride wherever they went. Soon there were requests for lodges

along “their circuits of travel” (as in the big theatre cities such as Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, Cincinnati, Sacramento, Baltimore, Louisville, St Louis and Boston). Per An Authentic History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks, “St Louis Lodge was scarcely three months old before initiating bright lights of the theatrical profession, starting with John T Raymond, John Norton, Samuel Colville, John McCullough and Lawrence Barrett....While New York Lodge would be naturally considered as the home of members of the theatrical profession, St Louis Lodge has been exceptionally honored in having upon its roster the name of the leading players and almost every legitimate old line caters of the American stage.”

Sequential numbers along with the home city, county, town or village of residence at the time of application creates the official name of a local lodge (as in BPOE 9, St. Louis, Missouri). The sequential numbers are assigned by the Grand Lodge once dispensation to an application has been granted. Hence, the St Louis Lodge was the 9th Elk Lodge of some eventual 3000 Elk lodges to receive its dispensation. Dispensations that preceded #9 were New York #1 (1868), Philadelphia #2 (1871), San Francisco #3 (1876), Chicago #4 (1876), Cincinnati #5 (1876), Sacramento # 6 (1877), Baltimore #7 (1877), and Louisville #8 (1877), Philadelphia #2, Chicago #4, Sacramento #6, and Baltimore #7 have all since closed, leaving St Louis #9 as one of only five “single digit” Elk Lodges remaining with its charter in place.

St Louis Lodge #9 remained the only Elk Lodge in Missouri until Kansas City Lodge #26 received its charter in 1884. By the turn of the 19th century, Missouri hosted no fewer than ten Elk Lodges (St Louis #9, Kansa City #26, St Joe #40, Sedalia #125, Hannibal #210, Springfield #409, Carrollton #415, Kirksville #464. Joplin #501 and Jefferson City #513.

The first Exalted Ruler of the Elks was George Thompson, elected to such position on May 24, 1868. He was followed by George Green (1870 / 71). It was during Green’s tenure that a group of Philadelphia professionals motioned for the creation of an Elks Lodge in their city. Once that motion was made, it became apparent that for the Order to expand, the New York Lodge and its officers would have to relinquish their titles and responsibilities and become subordinate to a not yet created higher level of “Grand Lodge” organization. The movement to create a new Grand Lodge culminated on February 12, 1871 and resulted in “the beginnings of our great American Fraternity which has spread to all corners of the United States and its possessions” (History of the Order of the Elks 1868 - 1988). To this day, St Louis Lodge #9 maintains its place as a subordinate lodge (now referred to as a local lodge) and annually sends its elected delegate to the Grand Lodge Convention.

St Louis Lodge #9 has hosted five National Conventions: 1899, 1939, 1953, 1991, and 2003. The most recent National Convention held in St Louis (2018) was hosted by the Missouri Elks Association.

As The number of Elk Lodges grew rapidly across the country (by 1910, over 1000 lodges had received a charter), organizational changes became necessary. Seeds of one of the earlier organizational changes was planted on August 10, 1899 in Springfield, Missouri. On that date, an organization called the Inter-State and Territorial Association of Elks was formed. It consisted of the current nineteen lodges in Kansas, ten lodges in Missouri, and Arkansas, Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory with four each. While the Inter-State and Territorial Association provided for a means of enhanced brotherhood and friendly competition amongst lodges, the real purpose of the Association was to create a louder and more effective voice at upcoming Grand Lodge Conventions.

As early as the 1890s, the topic of State Associations was debated by members of the Grand Lodge. Although not yet recognized by the BPOE Constitution, the Ohio Elks Association was formed in 1898 and followed four years later by the creation of the Georgia Elks Association. By 1914 there were 23 State Associations in existence, all without the blessing of our BPOE Constitution, including the Missouri Elks Association.

The first Missouri Elks Association recorded meeting took place in Mexico, Missouri at Lodge #919 on October 12, 1909. At that meeting, Norman M Vaughn of St Louis #9 was elected the first president of the Association. He would serve as President until the first Annual Convention of the Missouri Elk Association held at Lodge #919 on June 17th and 18th of 1910 (when Fred A Morris of Mexico #919 was elected President for the 1910 - 1911 year. Eight more members of Lodge #9 would eventually follow in Norman M Vaughn's footsteps as the president of the Missouri Elk Association; Lee Merriwether (1922 - 23), H A Hamilton (1929 - 31), E.J. Mart (1935 - 36), Lew Gallant (1939 - 40), Oliver Ash (1944 - 45), John T Dumont (1947 - 48), Rudolph Betlach (1951 - 52) and Daniel B Tammany (1964 - 65).

At the 1915 Grand Lodge Session in Los Angeles, a recommendation was made and approved to recognize State Associations and to make necessary BPOE Constitutional changes. A Grand Lodge Committee of State Associations Conference was held in St Louis on January 5, 1917 and at that conference a uniform constitution and by-laws was drafted and a Ritual for the installation of officers of State Associations was authored.

At the 1922 Missouri Elks State Convention, State President Lee Merriwether of St Louis Lodge #9 divided the Missouri Elk Lodges into seven districts, appointing a president of each district with the task of visiting each lodge in his district for the purposes of promoting Elk Programs and instilling a spirit of cooperation between lodges. St Louis Lodge #9 was placed in the First District with Poplar Bluff, Cape Girardeau, DeSoto, St Charles, and Caruthersville. Over the years, the Missouri Elk Districts have changed names and lodges. From 1935 until now St Louis Lodge #9 has been part of the East District, the Northeast District, the Southeast District, the Central District, the East Central District, the Metro District and finally, the Metro East District.

Thomas E. Garrett, the first **Exalted Ruler ("ER")** of #9, was born near West Chester, Pa. in 1828. He re-located to St. Louis in 1851 and began his business career with the Missouri Republic (soon to be re-named the St. Louis Republic) as a river reporter. He was soon promoted to the paper's dramatic critic role. Garrett would eventually become a distinguished author (The Masque of Muses), poet, a 33rd Degree Mason and the BPOE Exalted Grand Ruler (the only Lodge #9 member to attain that position). Garrett was the Order's 10th Exalted Grand Ruler and presided over Grand Lodge Sessions #33 (12/11/1881) and #34 (12/10/1882).

According to "An Authentic History of the Elks," Thomas E. Garrett' 1880 / 81 year as Exalted Grand Ruler was unfavorably affected "owing to the failure of Grand Secretary of the Order to fulfill his duties. Brother Garrett was handicapped in the discharge of his official duties, and the following year he was re-elected as a vindication of his efforts and again filled the Chair of the highest office in the Order for 1881 / 82."

One of the lasting legacies of EGR Garrett was the addition of the office of the Esquire, who took over a large portion of the work of the then Fourth Chair, called the Grand Lecturer, changed at the same time to Esteemed Lecturing Knight. No doubt, all Lodge #9 members should feel a lasting connection to past EGR Thomas E Garrett, but perhaps not nearly the connection felt by past, present and future #9 Esquires and Esteemed Lecturing Knights. Other St Louis Lodge #9 members having held prestigious Grand Lodge positions include; W C Jones (Chairman of Committee on Laws and Supervision 1885), Bernard Dickmann (Esteemed Leading Knight (1935 - 36), Oliver F Nash (Esteemed Lecturing Knight 1945 - 46), Arthur D Mason (Resolution Committee 1946), John T Dumont (1949 - 50), Edwin F Barisch (Missouri Special Deputy 1971 -73), Daniel Tammany (Judiciary Committee 1974 - 79), and W D Witherell (Ritualistic Chairman 1984 - 85).

On May 10th, 1911, the New York Times reported the death of #9's first member; "Col. Pat Short, manager of the Olympic and Century Theatres of St Louis, died tonight of pneumonia. He became ill while attending mass at the New Cathedral last Sunday. He was 62 years old and had been in the theatrical business forty-two years. Mr. Short was the first Elk in Missouri. Julie Marlowe was a protege of Mr. Short."

For the first thirty years of its existence, Lodge #9 was rather nomadic, housing itself in no fewer than six downtown buildings (Olympic Theatre, The Druid, People's Theatre, Laclede, Hagan and Holland Building). In 1908, Lodge #9 purchased the four story, gray stone mansion built in 1882 by Peter L Foy, the former Abraham Lincoln appointed postmaster of St Louis. The address of the mansion was 3617 Lindell Blvd, and the purchase price were \$37,500. A \$10,000 down payment on the property was made from carnival and animal circus profits earned by #9 and held on Hall Street. Per Elk historian Charles Edward Ellis, the Lodge on Lindell quickly became "the handsomest club in the country." In his 1910 "An Authentic History of The Elks," Ellis goes on to say "even back in the early days, St. Louis Lodge #9 was known for its charity. While there

are some sixty or 75 lodges larger and richer than old number 9, they have for years ranked 4th or 5th in the order of the amount of money expended for charity.....Incorporated in 1888.....in many things St. Louis has been a pioneer, or at least one of the early settlers. In 1899, extensive Christmas Charity work was begun by #9, likely the first Elk Lodge to conduct this work in a large, systematic way, providing 100s of local families with food, medicine and money.”

In May of 1882, the St. Louis Lodge purchased a large plot in Bellefontaine Cemetery for an Elk's Rest. The plot cost the Lodge \$800 and the pedestal for the protective Elk monument cost the Lodge an additional \$150. The monument itself, which still stands guard over The Rest was donated by a Col. John A. Cokerill (St. Louis' member 106, initiated on 4/18/1880). October 15, 1891, twenty-two months after the Lodge' first Lodge of Sorrows, marked the dedication of the St. Louis Elks rest. For at least the first three decades following its dedication, St Louis Lodge #9 observed Decoration Day at The Rest, complete with Elk Rituals, speakers, and brass bands. It was not unusual for the annual observance to attract 2000 - 3000 people.

In all, thirty-three St Louis Lodge #9 brothers are buried at the Elk Rest in Bellefontaine Cemetery (lot # 1043). Their names and year on internment are as follows: Louis Batavia (1906), Leon Blum (1899), Kenneth Bopp (1989), Frank Brown (1904), Richard Brownrigg (1951), Ernest Bugbee (1928), Don Cameron (1920), William Clark (1916), Lew Clarke (1901), John Cockerill (1896), James Dillard (1892), Aloe Frey (1883), David Gibson (1899), Phillip Hellmuth (1918), Albert Henning (1915), Britton Hill (1888), Howard Hutchinson (1943), John Johnston (1912), Charles Joy (1921), Walter Kennedy (1908), Alexander Konta (1933), John Link (1910), Edward Maurer (1909), William Mitchell (1888), Lew Morris (1911), Joel Myers (1946), John Norton (1895), Thomas Noxon (1898), Charles Pieree (1913), John Skiff (1921), Henry Steinmeyer (1956), A J Wagenmann (1908) and William Walsh (1906).

The Grand Lodge records count 78 Elk Rests scattered around the county. Some of these Rests have outlived the lodges that established them while others have been neglected or forgotten by their lodge. Nevertheless, it can say of those absent members, including the thirty-three Lodge #9 Brothers listed above, who chose an Elk Rest to be their final resting place; “once an Elk, eternally an Elk.”

For 62 years, Elks Lodge #9 called 3617 Lindell it's home (as well as the acquired, converted into a kitchen, 3619 Lindell property). The Lodge fortunately avoided the mobster scene that so dominated downtown St. Louis during the same years (see Daniel Waugh's Gangs of St. Louis). So socially prominent was 3617 Lindell Blvd that upon repeal of Prohibition, the very first beer delivery made by Anheuser Busch was to St. Louis Elks Lodge #9.

In 1949, thirty-two-year-old Bob Soell, a relatively new Ford car salesman joined Lodge #9 (Bob would go on to sell Ford vehicles for fifty-eight more years). In an 8/17/2013 interview with Bob, he told me that "in 1949, St. Louis Lodge members included the mayor, politicians, sports celebrities, big business executives, and union leaders." In 1952 while not selling Fords, Bob began promoting AAU basketball. He brought teams such as the Fort Wayne Pistons and Boston Celtics into town to play against the Amateurs. Bob would use the Elks name to help promote the games and raise money for charity. Friction in the Lodge developed over Bob's use of the Elk's name. At the time, #9's territory was the Mississippi to the Missouri River in the greater St. Louis area. Certain St. Louis members, frustrated with the friction, wanted to start a new lodge, but most of those voting, said "no," thus protecting #9's territorial bounds. Those wanting a new lodge, stayed members of #9, but began meeting separately with the intension of someday, starting a new lodge in the area.

The separatist group met in many places including Crossroads, Coachman's Restaurant, The Tulip Box in Maplewood, and Roncaro's Restaurant. The separatist lead by Herman Brooks, Greg Murray, John Gibbons, Francis Griffin, and Bob Soell laid out the framework for what was finally instituted on July 9, 1953 as lodge #1881. They chose 900 South Hanley, next to Bettendorf Grocery Store as their location (a large home owned by a Dr. Simmons) and the name "Clayton Lodge." At the time, Clayton restaurants had a bar closing hour of midnight. The Elks, being private, had no such restrictions (i.e., a recurring Jolly Cork theme from New York City in the 1860s), and no restrictions on election day (the Lodge became the only local place to eat and drink on election day). With their private status and "good neighbor" reputation in Clayton, Lodge #1881 grew rapidly to 350 to 400 members. Per Bill Wissbrock, "everybody that was somebody was an Elk."

At the same time, Ben Kerner, owner of the Milwaukee Hawks, was looking to relocate his NBA franchise and looked to either St. Louis or Indianapolis. Kerner's decision was to be based upon which city would provide season ticket holders. Soell committed the Clayton Elks to become the first 300 season ticket holders which provided St. Louis with the edge over Indianapolis. Kerner moved the Hawks to St. Louis and Kiel Auditorium for the 1955/56 NBA season.

With the separatists leaving #9, the St. Louis Lodge began to experience financial difficulties. The property on Lindell was too much for a small membership to handle. Additionally, the expansion of St. Louis University was possibly squeezing #9 out of the Lindell neighborhood. The remaining members of Lodge #9 decided to leave their Lindell address and to occupy space in The Bricklayer's Hall at 2000 Market Street (now known as Maggie O'Brien's). From there, Lodge #9 possibly made the mistake of moving to a South Broadway location (to further save money). Memories and stories are conflicting as some interviewed said that the South Broadway location was in the midst of a very nice middle-class neighborhood, while others remember it as a location that "no politician or businessman would visit."

In 1962, the Clayton Lodge was in a fair amount of debt that could only be resolved by selling their Clayton building and finding a more affordable location. The building sold by the Clayton Lodge is now a nine-story condo complex. While looking for property, #1881 meetings were held in places like Strike N Spare and a bar above Mavroco's Candy where St. Louis Suit Company now does business.

In 1963, the Lodge wrote a contract on property at the corner of Ballas and Ladue (now a very attractive gated estate), but the contract was contingent upon the owners of a school on that property, finding a new location, which did not happen, causing the purchase contract to become null and void. Soon thereafter, the Lodge settled on #9's current location. With the desire to maintain their Clayton #1881 identity and not wanting to become the "St. Louis County Lodge" (at the time, what was to become Creve Coeur was unincorporated St. Louis County) the Grand Lodge was successfully petition for name retention.

The Chesterfield Missouri Elks Lodge #2711 was instituted on November 23, 1986. The lodge took up residence at 504 Claymont Dr in what is now the city of Ballwin. The single-family ranch home that was used as the Chesterfield Lodge was built in 1963. Directionally, the lodge was in center of a large circle formed by Kehr's Mill, Clayton, Baxter and Hallway Roads. For golfers, think "close to Ballwin Golf Course."

In an apparent change in Grand Lodge strategy from expansion by starting new Lodges to strengthening local Lodges through mergers, Executive Order No 147 from Grand Exalter Ruler Ted Callicott to the Officers and Members of Chesterfield, Missouri Lodge #2711 and Clayton, Missouri Lodge # 1881 announced the approved merger request of the two lodges, effective March 1, 1988 (please note that upon retiring as Grand Exalted Ruler, Ted Callicott became the State Sponsor to the Grand Lodge for Missouri and Charles Slade and Joseph Black eventually became members of The Lodge #9 Past Exalted Rulers Association). The merger infused \$10,000 to #1881's balance sheet, money earned by Chesterfield Lodge concessions at the St. Louis County air shows.

The Overland, Missouri Lodge #2665 was instituted on July 9, 1983 and according to Missouri Elks Association records, "it merged into St Louis #9 on April 30, 1988 and within another 2 years St Louis #9 merged with Clayton Lodge #1881 and moved to 12481 Ladue Road. To that last merger, St. Louis Lodge #9 brought "a bunch of wandering Elk and trust fund." In the recollection of some members of Elkdom, that trust (known as the Martino Trust) was the only thing that kept #9 alive in the years leading up to mergers with Overland and Clayton. Per Grand Lodge practice, lodge mergers retain the lower lodge number identifies, thus the merger of Chesterfield #2711 and Clayton #1881 became Clayton #1881, the merger of Overland #2665 with St. Louis #9 became St. Louis #9 and the eventual merger of St. Louis #9 with Clayton #1881 became St. Louis #9. Regardless of name and number, just as our great country was founded on "the melting pot theory," so was today's #9 (note that George Murray and Howard Bopp as members of #1881 in 1961 – 1962 and 1961 – 1966 respectfully, can

be added to the list of Missouri State Presidents from the #9 merged family). A 5th Lodge, St. Louis South (instituted on January 16, 1988) is sometimes erroneously thought to be included in #9's melting pot. To prove that thought as erroneous is the noted charter surrender of South St, Louis Lodge #2636 on January 10, 1994.

The land acquired by Lodge #1881 (eventually to be Lodge #9) was sold to the Elks with the simple request "that they do something useful with the land." Building an Elks Lodge on the 7 acres, two building pieces of property (the two buildings were a small house used as a club room, kitchen, offices, restroom and cooler and a larger house, now the snack bar and lodge office). A new lodge building was constructed in 1964 and dedicated in 1965. The same swimming pool that #9 members use today was built at the same time. There was desire by some to build lighted tennis court on the front lawn. At the time, such would have been permissible for the unincorporated St. Louis County location, the motion was defeated in a close vote. The purchased property appeared extremely useful but perhaps not necessarily practical. At the time of acquisition, all surrounding area west of Lindberg Blvd was farmland and while many members of #1881 (and again, soon to be #9) remained in good standing, few ever ventured out to the new location. Helping the new location were those that joined from surrounding Arnold and Festus Lodges that were going through disruptive movements, further enhancing our melting pot heritage.

A move which was met with skepticism in the mid-60s, began to look rather brilliant by the 70s as Bellerive Country Club moved into the neighborhood and suddenly, Creve Couer was no longer "way out west." With one of the first commercial pools in the area, per Bob Wahlstron via Bill Wissbrock, Elks Lodge #9 was "rockin & rolling."

The Elk Lodge footprint on 12481 Ladue road has not changed too terribly much in 50+ years. Gone is the old white shed on the west side of the property that served as both a kitchen and an outhouse. Added are the in-lodge bathroom facilities, a reconfiguration of the bar area and sand volleyball courts.

Throughout the early years of Elks Lodge at 12481 Ladue Road, there were opportunities for the Elk membership to up and move to a new location. Prior to filling in their pool, the Claymont subdivision invited the Elks to move into their neighborhood and take over their pool and prior to closing their golf course, the Cherry Hills Country Club invited the Elk members of 12481 Ladue Road to consider buying the golf course and moving further out west. The Claymont offer was impractical operationally while the Cherry Hills Country Club offer was impractical financially. In the late 1990s, the Robinwood subdivision offered #9 to assume ownership of their swimming pool and picnic area at no cost. The property at 12481 Ladue Road could have been sold for \$2 million which would have allowed #9 a state of the art Elks lodge on some or all of the 8 acers of undeveloped Robinwood land, build a private road entrance to the new lodge, and recruit the existing 100 members of the subdivision for #9 membership, In a close vote, perhaps decided by 10 or fewer votes, the members of #9 decided to "stay home" at 12481 Ladue Road.

From 1871 until 1980, membership in the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks grew from 243 members to 1,649,267. From 1980 through the present, Fraternal Organizations in the United States have struggled to maintain membership levels, let alone grow membership. The reasons for the struggle can be debated. As for St Louis Lodge #9, membership today (in 2021) is approximately the same as it was in 1910 (792 compared to 699), but from its trough of just over 200 members not too many years ago, Elks Lodge #9 is back to being as vibrant as ever (as evidenced by its 2nd place division finish in the 2020 / 21 national BPOE All American Lodge Contest). In recent years, membership at #9 has rapidly grown and continues to get younger, both divergent from national BPOE trends. While Lodge #9 members embrace their past with reverence, they look forward to a Lodge #9 future with enthusiasm and curiosity. As Lodge #9 concludes its first 150 years, it looks forward to the next 150 years and beyond.

Appendix

Key locations and "first dates" of #9's nomadic days per An Authentic History of The Elks and local newspaper archives:

- 1) First social session of Lodge #9; 11/24/1878. Charles E Curtis became the first Lodge #9 member to pass away. He died on January 22, 1879.
- 2) **Moved** to People's Theatre Building on the south side of Olive between 3rd and 4th on 9/25/1881.
- 3) **Moved** to the Laclede Building at 408 Olive on 10/14/ 1888. The first Lodge #9 of Sorrows was held at the Laclede Building in December of 1889.
- 4) **Moved** to The Hagan Building at 10th and Pine in March of 1892.
- 5) **Moved** to The Holland Building at 215 N 7th St on 8/26/1897.

Key dates in the Melting Pot evolution of resurrected #9 per Tommy Jones "Elks Lodges Numerically.":

- 1) Clayton Lodge #1881 was instituted on 4/03/1953. It merged with Chesterfield on 3/01/1988 and with St. Louis on 2/16/1990.
- 2) Overland Lodge #2665 was instituted on 07/09/1983. It merged with St. Louis on 4/30/1988.
- 3) Chesterfield Lodge #2711 was instituted on 11/23/1896. It merged with Clayton on 3/10/1988.

4) Charter issued in 1988 for South St. Louis Lodge #2736. Charter was surrendered in 1994. This lodge is not in the blood line of #9.

Corner stone dates at 12481 Ladue Rd.

1) January 19, 1956 dedication date for 900 South Hanley Rd.

2) 1965 as the first shovel date for 12481 Ladue Rd Lodge.

Books:

An Authentic History of The Benevolent and Protective Order of The Elks

An Account of the Origin and Early History of The Benevolent and Protective Order of The Elks of the USA

History of The Order of The Elks 1868 - 1988

History of The Order of The Elks 1988 - 2008

The Story of Elkdom

A Biography of Charles Vivian

Stars of Tomorrow (BPOE Past, Present and Future)

What It Means to Be an Elk

Gang of St. Louis

Web Site

Http:// www.newspapers.com

[Http://www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)

[Http://www.tommyjones.org](http://www.tommyjones.org)

Wikipedia; Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

Zillow

New York Times

Missouri Elks Association

Elks.org

Bellefontaine Cemetery, St Louis, Mo

[Http://www.Elks2477.com](http://www.Elks2477.com)

Misc.:

St Louis Lodge #9 archives

Clayton Lodge #1881 25th anniversary program

PER Bob Soell's personal notes and diaries

PER Hal Dygert's personal notes and diaries

PDDGER, PSVP, PER Mick Conley's personal notes and diaries