

HISTORY OF RENO ELKS LODGE #597 – IN A NUTSHELL

The Reno Elks Lodge #597 as you see it today, represents a lodge which was Nevada's first Elks Lodge, Chartered June 30, 1900. Through these many years, the lodge has been on three different sites. The Investment Building downtown was a temporary home until the actual Elks Lodge at 50 N. Sierra St. was occupied in April 1904. It was regarded as "by far the handsomest and most elegantly furnished building in the city and one of the best club buildings on the coast". (The cornerstone from that building can be seen out in front of our lodge.)

The Lodge prospered and practically everyone that was anyone in Reno's business community was initiated into the Elks Lodge. It became very prestigious to be an Elk! At one point, the membership was cut off at 5,000 members!

After a horrific gas explosion downtown in 1957 destroyed the Elks Home (as they referred to it), this building was built and was dedicated on Febr. 5, 1961. A beautiful Olympic-sized swimming pool was added and opened in June of 1963.

As the years went on, the club had its "ups and downs" as all clubs do. Our building was purchased by private parties two other times and each time, when we were about ready to move out, the buyer gave us the building back! These good fortunes helped us get out of dire financial trouble in the early 1990's.

In 2004, we (again) sold this building and land to a casino group who had plans to raze the club and build a casino and parking lot on the site. Agreements in place at the time allowed us to purchase property elsewhere in southeast Reno and preliminary work was begun on a brand new lodge. We were given 5 years to vacate this location and move to our new building.

When the market changed, the casino reconsidered their decision and backed out of the deal. The natural alternative for the Elks Club was a significant remodel to revitalize this existing property. This remodel started in July of 2010. The building was never vacated, as we felt strongly that if we had nowhere for our members to hold meetings and gather socially, that we would lose those members. Consequently, the remodel was done in four phases. We never cancelled a meeting although from month to month, members had to go searching to see where the secretary's office was (that office was relocated 3 times!) and ALL dinners were cooked on the barbeque as the kitchen was completely gutted during the first phase.

After completion of the remodel in about 15 months, the younger members of our community saw it as a nice, safe place to gather, and the applications started flooding in! Our membership exploded from 734 on April 1, 2010, to 1340 as of April 1, 2017.