

History of Patchogue Elks Lodge # 1323

2015 – 100 Years A Major Milestone in the History of the Lodge

Patchogue Lodge was the first Lodge of Elks established in Suffolk County. Prior to its installation there were members residing in the Patchogue area and elsewhere in the County. These were mainly members of Freeport, Queens and Brooklyn Lodges. These members felt a growing need for a more convenient base of operation from which to apply, in an organized way, that cardinal principle of charity that distinguishes the Order of Elks. The population of Patchogue at that time was a little more than 5,000, sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the Grand Lodge to issue a charter. Thus Patchogue Lodge No. 1323 was instituted June 15, 1915 with 39 members. Following the organization of the Lodge and the election of its Officers and receipt of its Charter the next important step toward progress was to locate a regular meeting place. The Edwards house, East Main Street and Maple Avenue was obtained and became the first clubhouse for Patchogue Lodge. Possession of the property was financed entirely by notes assumed by the members. Confidence in the future of an enterprise that leads a man to dig down into his pocketbook to help finance it bespeaks not only of the enthusiasm for it but a love for what it stands for. This has been an outstanding characteristic of the membership of Patchogue Lodge ever since.

On the day of its installation Patchogue Lodge was host to delegations of members of Lodges from Queens, Freeport, Bronx, New York City, Mount Vernon, Port Chester and New London. There was a parade and a generous collation, the latter provided by Patchogue members. The attendance was too large for the modest quarters of the Lodge hence the Star Palace Theatre was secured, the management having cancelled their show for the evening. Presiding over the installation ceremonies was the then District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler, Sydney A. Syme of Mount Vernon Lodge No. 842. It is interesting to note that the Hon. Sydney A. Syme was at one time one of Westchester County's brilliant Prosecuting Attorneys.

There were 14 initiates in addition to the following 39 charter members: John Stewart, Alex G. Blue, Wm. B. McDaniel, Fred C. Thurber, George G. Waldbauer, August D. Schoenfeld, Oscar Kloberg, Frank M. Lowden, George DuBois, Frank E. Reed, Clarence M. Rogers, E. B. Weeks, John Ginocchio, Frank Hollman, Luigi Lotito, J. Frank Rogers, A.H. Gottlieb, H. L. Koerner, William F. Butler, Sr., Leo Waldheimer, Foster Aviano, Raymond D. Wilson, Dayton Hedges, J. Robert Bailey, Dr., Milton B. Davis, Fran Niguét, Clarence W. Coleman, Jerome W. Ackerly, Henry Schaefer, Frank X. Mayer, Frank G. Bauer, Richard Beck, Joseph R. Dare, Robert E. Bishop, Wm. J. Loughlin, Frank Lightbody, Frank J. Fuhrmann, Frank L. Brophy and Percy B. Cooper.

First Officers installed were: Exalted Ruler, John Stewart; Esteemed Leading Knight, Alex G. Blue; Esteemed Loyal Knight, J. Frank Rogers; Esteemed Lecturing Knight, August D. Schoenfeld; Secretary, Wm. B. McDaniel; Treasurer, Dayton Hedges; Tiler, George DuBois; Trustees, J. Robert Bailey, Raymond D. Wilson and George G. Waldbauer. Appointed Officers were: Esquire, Fred C. Thurber; Chaplain, William F. Butler, Sr.; Inner Guard, F. M. Lowden; Organist, H. L. Koerner.

As an important factor in the life of the community Patchogue Lodge very quickly made its influence felt. By the examples of its many charitable enterprises and reputation as a social center where good fellowship prevailed, it rapidly attracted an increasing membership of substantial and responsible men. So encouraging did the future seem that it was decided to build a new clubhouse and accordingly plans were drawn and approved by the Lodge for an impressive and spacious home. The cornerstone was laid with appropriate ceremonies, March 28th, 1925. The Hon. Leo Hickey was principal speaker for the occasion. March 28th, 1926 the building was formally taken over by the Lodge. The event was marked by a celebration attended by important personages from all parts of the State and in commenting on it, the Patchogue Argus said, "These men realize, as few outside the Lodge can, just what the new home means to these fearless thinkers and men of action, who made it possible for the Village of Patchogue to have a home of this kind, which will be a pride to the Village for years to come, a mark of distinction which will set Patchogue apart from all other Island Villages."

As is true for all social and fraternal orders, in times of depression finances decline and the Patchogue Lodge was no exception, its membership were forced to seek new quarters which it did at the home of Dr. C. A. O'Leary, 292 South Ocean Avenue. Following this, the Lodge moved to 20 Baker Street. A further move was made to 38 East Main Street. Through all its changes of fortune, a loyal, determined group held the Lodge together and as economic conditions improved nationally in the middle thirties so they did locally and Patchogue Lodge again experienced a growth in its membership. So continuous was the growth and so improved and improving was the condition of the Lodge that it occupied a clubhouse at 251 East Main Street, into which it moved March, 1948. After taking over the building, originally U.S.O. Headquarters and later the home of the V.F.W., extensive improvements were made. Mainly, in 1961 the addition of an impressive Lodge Meeting Room, which was also used for income as a catering facility and bingo hall. In 1985 a storage area was added to the rear of the hall. In 1986 the upstairs was renovated by combining two rooms, the hallway and closets to make a spacious "Members Only Room".

As the century drew to a close Patchogue Lodge experienced the impact of inflation which greatly affected the finances of the Lodge by way of increasing costs for maintenance and major surges in tax requirements. Once again the members pulled together and voted to sell the 251 East Main Street Lodge and search for a more affordable Lodge. A Relocation Committee was formed in December of 2001 and in November of 2002 the membership approved the purchase of a Lodge building located at 14 Oak Street, Patchogue. The building was once owned by Swezey's Department Store. The new Lodge building was officially purchased on March 31, 2003 and renovations began very soon thereafter. On July 31, 2005 the Lodge's 1st female Exalted Ruler Therese Read Rosavitch hosted a grand opening with a delegation of members from the entire Elks East District and an invitation was also extended to our friends in the Patchogue community. There was a dedication Ceremony and a collation, the latter provided by the Patchogue members. Today 14 Oak Street remains the home of Patchogue Elks.

In the vicissitudes of the life of Patchogue Lodge, its fluctuations of fortune, its growth, decline and regrowth of membership, it has always, to the best of its means, put into practice the greatest virtue of Elkdom – Charity. Its Christmas donation to more than 5 food pantries, its concern for physically challenged children and the Elk promise of honoring our Veterans, its contributions to worthy community enterprises, these are matters of deep, continuing interest to the membership of Patchogue Lodge. While sociability is an important feature of membership in the Elks nonetheless, the true worth of an Elks Lodge is measured by its worth to the community and this Patchogue Lodge has never been found wanting.

Yes, now in its **100th** Year Patchogue Elks remain on the road to success - fraternally, financially and with great honor, loyal to its commitment in helping those in need throughout the community.