
History of Watervliet Lodge #1500

In order to fully understand the history of Watervliet Lodge #1500, We must return to 1911, 14 years before we were formally granted a charter by the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. Back then, a group of 15 men enjoyed gathering on the "Old Congress Street Bridge". Seventy-Nine years ago, the bridge was a place where people could sit and watch the afternoon grow into evening, complete with benches at either entrance. As winter approached, the benches lost their charm and their warmth, and those 15 men took up residence at Cray's Drug Store on Broadway and 19th Street. One would have to search a long way to find that corner today. There, they sipped hot toddies and beef bouillon until the impatient proprietor saw fit to 'street' them. It was about this time when these men decided to find a meeting place they could call their own. The 15 men rented a flat over Skip Gaughan's Saloon that was located near what was Sherlock's Grill on 16th Street. Both of these establishments are now gone, given up to make way for our changing times. They also decided it was about time they named their organization. They chose the 'Ghost Club'. Shortly after, they moved to larger accommodations at 1537 First Avenue, Watervliet. Just as the early founders of Elksdom, which was formed by a New York theatrical group, calling themselves the Jolly Corcks, the Ghost Club was composed of singers and actors. At their new location this young organization prospered through the numerous plays and minstrels they staged. By 1924, membership had grown well beyond the original 15 men. The members of the 'Ghost Club' decided to petition the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks for membership affiliation. In June 1925, this group of American gentlemen were granted a Charter in one of the largest fraternal organizations in the country. Watervliet Lodge # 1500 of the Benevolent and Protective order of Elks came into existence, led by our first Exalted Ruler Joseph Keis.

In 1939, a short fourteen years after receiving our charter, the young lodge purchased the 'Roy Mansion' (our current home) located on Fourth Avenue in Watervliet for the unheard of price of \$2500.00. The Roy family, who owned a woolen mill in the city, had previously owned the premises. They in turned sold the property to Allegheny Ludlum Steel Company, who used the building as a recreational club for their employees. And so the 168 members of Watervliet Lodge #1500 had a home they could call their own. The building is much different today than when we moved here in 1939. Among other rooms, the first floor housed a chapel and the bowling alley. In 1953 the building was renovated to accommodate our increasing membership. Our beautiful lodge meeting room and banquet hall were added and the bowling alleys were moved to the basement area, where they still remain today. Many more changes have occurred since we acquired the building. The most notable of which is the Partico, which adorns our front entrance. As we enter the 21st century, many new changes are planned for our facility. Today, Watervliet Lodge boasts a membership in excess of 1300 members and still growing.

We are also proud to have a very active Ladies Auxiliary. Without the dedication and continual help from our ladies, many of the benevolent works we are able to accomplish would not be possible. The ladies will soon be celebrating their 65th Anniversary and we congratulate them on their accomplishments.

From its humble beginnings in 1925 up to the present day, Watervliet lodge #1500 is proud to demonstrate that 'Elks Care - Elks Share'. Our members and our ladies continue to dedicate themselves to our community, our veterans, our youth and to the many charitable organizations we sponsor.

We at Watervliet Lodge #1500 are proud of our history, proud of our 75 years of service and proud to be a part of the greatest organization on earth:

'The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks'
