

The moving spirit for the Elks was an Englishman named Charles Algernon Sidney Vivian. Born October 22, 1842, the son of a clergyman and successful comic singer and dancer in the music halls of London. In November 1867, Vivian arrived in New York City to try his fortune. Other actors and entertainers soon gravitated toward his magnetic personality.

With everything closed on Sunday because of New York City Blue Laws, a group of theatrical people began meeting for their own amusement under Vivian's leadership. A loose organization was formed to make sure the larder was well-stocked for these gatherings. They called themselves the Jolly Corks, a name derived from a trick introduced by Vivian in which the uninitiated purchased a round of refreshments.

When one of their members died shortly before Christmas in 1867, leaving his wife and children destitute, the Jolly Corks decided that in addition to good fellowship, they needed a more enduring organization to serve those in need.

On February 16, 1868, they established the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and elected Vivian to head it. Its social activities and benefit performances increased the popularity of the new Order. Membership grew rapidly. Elks traveling to other cities spread the word of the Brotherhood of Elks. Soon there were requests for Elks Lodges in cities other than New York.

In response to these appeals, the Elks asked the New York State legislature for a charter authorizing the establishment of a Grand Lodge with the power to establish local Lodges anywhere in the United States. When the Grand Lodge Charter was issued, the founders then received the first local charter as New York Lodge No. 1 on March 10, 1871.

Chanute Lodge No. 806 was instituted on August 6, 1902, with 38 Charter Members. 29 were initiated that night. J. N. McDonald, who transferred from the Parsons Lodge, along with 8 other Elks transferring from various other lodges, were the driving force that made our lodge a reality. On August 14, 1902, our Charter was granted by the assembled Grand Lodge Convention in Salt Lake City.

There have been three State Presidents from Chanute; Raymond Friederich (1974-75), Herb Matlock (1997-98), and Frank Springer (2005-06). Thirteen District Deputy Grand Exalted Rulers have come from our ranks, W.E. Cutler (1909-10), John Lapham (1919-20), Joe Johnson (1930-31), J.S. Sterner (1947-48), Howard Parsons (1954-55), Raymond Friederich (1964-65), Sherel Booe (1967-68), George Butler (1970-71), Carl Larcom (1977-78), Harold Young (1984-85), Herb Matlock (1989-90), Frank Springer (1997-98), and Brenda Harrison (2012-13). Two of our members were honored with appointments on the national level. Raymond Friederich was appointed to the Grand Lodge New Lodges Committee in 1977-78. Frank Springer was appointed Special Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler for Kansas in 2016 and continues in that office. Frank also served as Grand Inner Guard (2020-21).

For the first two years of the Lodge's existence, meetings were held at the Odd Fellows Hall, over what most people recognize today as Benchwarmers Restaurant. On March 17, 1904, W. E. Cutler, then Exalted Ruler, conducted the first meeting in our newly constructed home at 113 East Main. This remained the Lodge's home for the next 62 years.

Our 38 Charter Members grew to 323 by 1915. It was then we built a recreation center at 15 South Highland. This new building provided members with a gym, an indoor swimming pool, and a bowling alley. It was attached to the main lodge by a second floor walkway across the alley. Our membership continued to grow and the Lodge prospered until the depression era of the 1930's. Financial hardship and loss of members forced us to turn over our buildings to a bonding company. The Lodge leased-back the top two floors of 113 East Main and we struggled along with the rest of the country.

For over a decade, our remaining members worked hard and recruited new active members. Through their efforts we were able to re-purchase the lodge building in 1946. It was immediately remodeled and re-decorated.

In 1947, what is now known as Elks Lake, and approximately 100 acres of land surrounding it, was purchased from the Allen family. In 1956, the Hoshaw building, or what some people still refer to as the old Foster's Clothing Store, was purchased for future expansion. Lodge growth flourished, and our membership increased to over 900 by 1960.

In 1965, George Butler, then Exalted Ruler, broke ground on a new Lodge home at Main and Central. We moved into this new building at 321 East Main Street in the spring of 1966. Membership soared to over 1,000 and the Lodge prospered for the next two decades.

The rising cost of energy and declining membership of the 1990's made us face some hard economic decisions. We determined it was financially prudent to downsize, sold 321 East Main Street, and moved to our present Lodge home at 101 South Central in 1997. Moving to a smaller home caused a loss in membership, but once again, our remaining members worked hard and recruited new active members.

Our Lodge today is growing with 550 active members although we consider ourselves a work in progress. For over 115 years our members have had fun, while actively serving our community. In doing so Chanute Elks Lodge has contributed more than \$4.6 million to local charities, youth groups, and veterans service programs since its beginning. Our benevolent programs such as scholarships, drug awareness, hoop shoot, soccer shoot, fishing derbies, and kite flights are vital to the development of Chanute's youth leaders for tomorrow.

While our great Order boasts over 150 years of service, we celebrate our accomplishments of the past while looking forward to our future. Who can say what challenges face us? One thing is for sure; we will continue the Elks' tradition of caring for our members and sharing in our community.