

# The History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks



## *The Origins of the BPOE*



**Front Row: E. W. Platt, William Carleton, Richard R. Steirly, Charles A. Vivian, Henry Vandermark, M. G. Ash**  
**Back Row: Frank Langhorne, William Sheppard, John T. Kent, Harry Bosworth**  
**Not in Picture: G. F. McDonald, W. I. Bowron, Thomas G. Riggs, J. G. Wilson, John H. Blume**

It was Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1867, when Charles A. Vivian, an English comic singer, landed in New York via an English trading vessel from South Hampton. On the night of his arrival he dropped into the Star Hotel, a Free and Easy kept by John Ireland on Lispenard street near Broadway. Richard R. Steirly, also of English birth, was a piano player at the Star Hotel. Vivian struck up an acquaintance with him and volunteered to sing a few songs. He made such an impression on John Ireland that the latter sent for his friend, Robert Butler, manager of the American Theater on

Broadway. Vivian sang for Butler, making such a hit that he was engaged for a three week's run at the American. When closing time came at the Star Hotel, Steirly took Vivian around to his boarding house at 188 Elm Street, kept by Mrs. Giesman, There he found a collection of congenial spirits, among them William Bowron, who also knew Vivian in his native land. The streets in that section of New York have been re-plotted and their names changed so that the plot known as 188 Elm Street can now be found on LaFayette Street in the block between Broome and spring Streets. In 1939 the Council of the City of New York passed the following resolution: Be it resolved... that the two blocks remaining on Elm Street be known as Elk Street to pay tribute to the famous Order of Elks which was founded on that Street in the year 1867.

On November 23rd , 1867, Dick Steirly went to the American Theater to take notes for the purpose of orchestrating some of Vivian's songs. After the matinee, Vivian took Steirly over to Sandy Spencer's place at Broadway and Fulton Street, There they met Hughley Dougherty, Cool Burgess and Henry Vandemark.



Hughley Dougherty



Cool Burgess



Henry Vandemark

The latter suggested that the party shake dice for the refreshments. Vivian replied that he never handled the cubes, but would show them a new game. Calling for three corks he gave one each to Steirly and Vandemark, keeping the other for himself, He asked Cool Burgess to be the judge and Dougherty to count to three. They rehearsed the trick of each dropping his cork on the bar and picking it up as rapidly as possible, several times, the idea conveyed to initiated being that the last man to lift his cork was to buy. Vivian then gave the word of command, Dougherty counted, He and Steirly passed their hands over their corks while Vandemark, eager to lift his cork from the bar, was both first and last to pick it up, and consequently was stuck for the round. This was the first introduction of a delectable form of amusement which became popular.

## **BIRTH OF THE JOLLY CORKS**

At about this time the Excise Law was being strictly enforced and wishing to continue their social gatherings on Sundays, when New York's blue laws prevented the opening of public establishments, devotees of the cork trick formed the habit of congregating at Mrs. Giesman's on this day to hold social conventions under the

inspiring influences of a stock of beer laid in the night before. This little coterie styled itself the Corks, with Vivian as the Imperial Cork.

The revels of the Jolly crew meeting at Mrs. Giesman's became disturbing to the other boarders and she finally required them to forego their Sunday gatherings in her house. Quarters were found at 17 Delancy Street, over a saloon kept by Paul Sommers, where the meetings were continued. The object of the Corks at this time was entirely convivial. It's membership was composed of professional and semi-professional entertainers with a sprinkling of legitimate actors. Among the latter were Thomas Riggs, George McDonald, William Sheppard and George Thompson, a theatrical agent. When the cork trick was tried on McDonald it amused him so that he called the coterie the JOLLY CORKS, and as they began to meet regularly as the "Jolly Corks," it has gone down upon the pages of history. While the meetings were held with regularity, apparently no form nor substance resulted, except for the adoption of a toast to members of the group not in attendance. In the latter part of December just before the holidays, they were returning from a funeral of a friend, Ted Quinn, one of their number who had died, leaving his wife and children destitute. This event gave rise to the notion that, in addition to good fellowship, the Jolly Corks needed a more noble purpose in order to endure, and serving not only their own in need, but others as well, would be appropriate. McDonald made the suggestion that the Jolly Corks become a protective and benevolent society. At the meeting held on the 2nd of February, 1868, presided over by Charles A. Vivian, George McDonald offered a motion to organize the Jolly Corks as a lodge along benevolent and fraternal lines and providing a committee be appointed to formulate rules and regulations for it's government, prepare a suitable ritual, and select a new name. Vivian had in mind an English organization, The Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalos, of which he was a member, but the majority were desirous of bestowing a distinctively American title upon the new organization. A committee visited Cooper Institute Library, where the Brothers found the ELK described in a work on Natural History as an animal, fleet of foot, timorous of doing wrong, but ever ready to combat in defense of self or of the female of the species. This description appealed to the committee as containing admirable qualities for emulation by members of a benevolent fraternity and the title ELK was incorporated in its report.



George McDonald

## **BIRTH OF THE ORDER OF ELKS**

Two months after the death of Ted Quinn, on February 16, 1868, with a statement of serious purpose, an impressive set of rituals, a symbol of strength and majesty and such other elaborate trappings that might be expected of a group of actors and musicians, the new fraternal order was launched. On February 16, 1868, the committee reported, recommending that the Jolly Corks be merged into the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and the recommendation was adopted by a vote of eight (8) to seven (7). Listed below are those who voted for what name.

For BUFFALO: Charles A. Vivian; Richard Steirly; M.G. Ash; Henry Vandermark; Harry Bosworth; Frank Langhorne; E. W. Platt.

For ELK: George McDonald; George Thompson; Thomas Riggs; William Carleton; William Sheppard; George Guy; Hugh Dougherty; William Bowron.

According to "[A Biographical Sketch of Charles A.S. Vivian](#)" by Imogen Hollbrook Vivian, some historians say, "W. L. Bowron was inclined at first to favor 'Buffalo' but changed his mind and became the decisive factor in the final selection of the name 'Elk'. Other historians say that the vote was a tie and that Vivian was finally brought around to favor the name 'Elk' and cast the deciding vote from the chair."

## **The Death of Charles A. Vivian**

This may sound familiar the age old division, are we a Lodge or a Club a fraternal society or a social gathering. It seems that was decided in June of 1868. With the beginnings of the B.P.O.E. a breach was opened between two factions within the ranks, which rapidly developed into a feud. On one hand were the legitimate actors, endeavoring to invest the new organization with principals and ideas in keeping with a benevolent and fraternal institution, while on the other were the semi-professional entertainers more in sympathy with the original purposes of the convivial Jolly Corks.

Charles Vivian was the leader of the latter faction. Although Charles was the acting Exalted Ruler, then referred to as "Primo" the official election of officers for the BPOE was to take place at a meeting two months later in May 1868. Charles was acting Primo and it was expected that would be elected to carry on as Primo. Many of the new Elks, including some former "Corks" thought Charlie's primary ambition was for the New Elks to be more of a social group, like the "Corks" had been rather than the benevolent group they thought it should be. Charles was working out of town and unable to attend the elections held at their May 17th meeting. At that meeting the election was held and former 'Cork" George Thompson was elected to be Primo and not Charlie.

At the next meeting in June an attempt was made to summarily expel Charlie from the newly formed group but his friends objected. So vigorous were their protests that the meeting was adjourned and no further attempt was ever made in regard to expel Charlie, as he never afterwards sought admission.

One-week later Charlie's friends that protested so loudly were denied admission to the next meeting. Shortly there after, with out trial, notice of accusation, or any opportunity for defense Charles and eight others, six of which were former "Corks" were expelled from the order.

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 re-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 fairly 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. As far as can be learned from personal friends, Charles Vivian never claimed to have been an ELK. He did claim to have been one of the organizers of the Elks, which he was, but never took the degrees of the Order, and severed all connections with it a few months after it was born. Vivian continued, after his expulsion from the Order, to enchant audiences across the country. He starred with some of the largest road companies of the time. Together with his actress wife, the former Imogene Holbrook, Vivian set up a repertoire theater in Leadville, Colorado.

At any rate, to put a quick end to this part, 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 actually the founder of the Order. In 1897, a formal inquiry firmly established his right to this honored title. It is not known if Charlie ever attended another Elks meeting before he died from pneumonia in Leadville, Colorado on March 20th 1880 at the age of 34. He was buried there. Although there was still some reluctance by some to actually refer to Charles Vivian as the Elks Founder, in 1889, under the auspices of Boston Lodge # 10 his remains were exhumed and moved to the 'Elk Rest' section of the Mt. Hope Cemetery in Boston, where he was given an appropriate burial as the Elks founder.

Charles Vivian is credited with contributing the 11 O'clock toast to the Order of Elks.



## *Why the "Elks?"*

Since its founding on February 16, 1868, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (BPOE) has been recognized by the noble creature that is the symbol of the Order. The elk is a peaceful animal, but will rise in defense of its own in the face of a threat. The majestic creature is fleet of foot and keen of perception. A most fitting representation, the stately elk is, for a distinctively American, intensely patriotic, family oriented organization subscribing to the cardinal principles of Elkdom, "Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity." The 15 Founders of the BPOE desired a readily identifiable creature of stature, indigenous to America. Eight members voted to adopt the elk, seven favored the buffalo.



The main Founder of the Elks, Brother Charles Algernon Sidney Vivian, an English-born actor, was a member of the British fraternity known as the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. Brother Vivian especially desired to see the new Order adopt the title of "buffaloes," but the vote carried with the name of "Elks."



## *Fraternal Traditions of the BPOE*

The BPOE adopted several fraternal traditions similar to the Masonic Fraternity. An altar, decorated with the Holy Bible, is found in the center of every Lodge throughout Elksdom. Old Glory served as the altar's drapery until 1956, when it was given its own distinct place of honor to the right of the altar. An "Exalted Ruler" governs each Elks Lodge as the "Worshipful Master" does in a Masonic Lodge.



Elk Officers wear formal evening dress (tuxedos) during the Initiation Ritual and other ceremonials of the Order. Since 1874, the Exalted Ruler and officers of every Elks Lodge began wearing the new Elks regalia, composed of a purple velvet collar with a small, fawn colored roll and a jewel with an Elk's head with a gilt edge on the collar.

A "Tiler" guards the entrance of every Elks Lodge, and this officer prevents all outsiders from entering a Lodge without proving themselves to be an Elk in good standing.

The BPOE originally utilized a two-degree ritual; the second degree was discontinued in 1890. In fact, the BPOE Grand Lodge has outlawed any side degrees. The solemn and dignified BPOE Initiation Ritual of today is vastly different from the Initiation performed within our Lodges in those early days, with the early minutes of several Lodges, describing the now-solemn ritual in a far different vein.

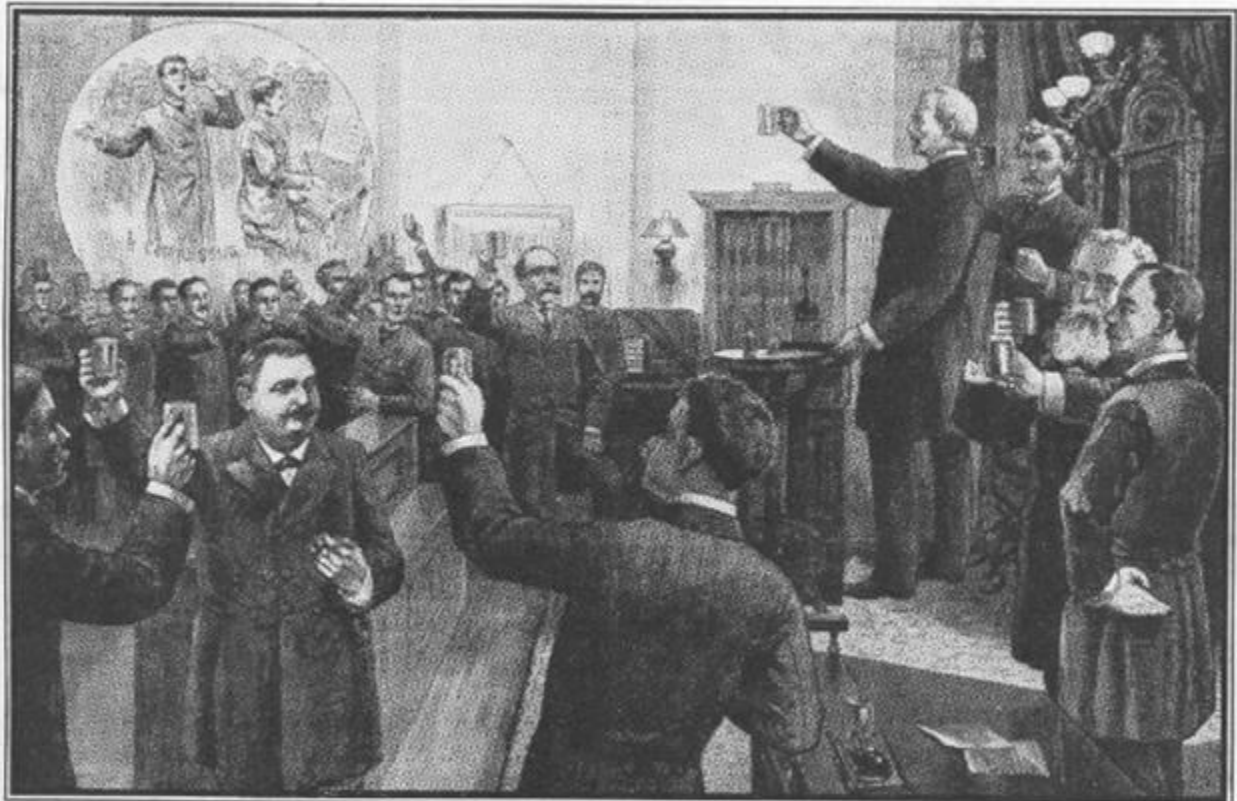
Early candidates found that a physician's certificate of examination was necessary as a part of the joining process, and the male prospect had to be in top condition to even be considered. Then, once the candidate had met that criteria and was in the Lodge room, he was blindfolded, and instead of dimmed lights and beautiful words, he was subjected to much horseplay. The minutes of the Ashland Lodge No. 384 describe in detail of their candidates wearing shoes with lead soles designed to make the wearer walk as though intoxicated.

The old Ritual Book spells out other trickery, with members agreeing with the Exalted Ruler's declaration that the candidates be "shaved." Once this decision was made, a "City Barber" appeared to the blindfolded candidates whereupon, with a dull file simulating a straight razor, he literally scraped the faces of the men to "shave" them. A few other jokes, all of which were contained in the Ritual Book, described each ordeal in great detail, such as "walking on broken glass," actually egg shells, and it even mentioned how to end the "horseplay" session with real guns, loaded with blanks, being fired off behind the now-weary and very confused new members.

In 1895, the Elks ceased the use of lambskin aprons in their initiatory work, the password was eliminated in 1899, in 1902 the use of a badge was eliminated, with the secret grip falling by the wayside in 1904 and the "Test Oath" was removed in 1911. In 1952, candidates were no longer blindfolded prior to the Initiation. 1995, women were admitted into the Order.



## *The Eleven O'clock Toast*



*The 11 o'clock toast to the absent: an Elk custom*

Culver

At every meeting of the BPOE, and every social function, when the hour of 11:00 p.m. tolls, the Lodge conducts a charming ceremonial known as the "Eleven O'clock Toast." In fact, the clock tolling the eleventh hour is part of the BPOE official emblem,



and is directly behind the representation of an elk's head in the emblem of the Order.

Regular meetings of Subordinate Lodges have always been held at night. In the earlier days, they were usually held on Sunday nights and were concluded about eleven o'clock. As the participants departed, the Brothers made inquiries about the absent Brothers and expressed sympathetic interest in the causes of their absence.

It soon became a custom for some member to propose a toast to the Brothers who were not present. And in the course of time, this custom was quite generally observed whenever a group of Elks were together at eleven o'clock. Eventually, the Grand Lodge specifically provided for such a ceremonial to be observed during Lodge sessions; and designated it as "The Eleven O'clock Toast." Under this provision, whenever a Lodge was in session at that hour, the regular order of business was suspended for a few moments while the Exalted Ruler recited the beautiful ritual prescribed, concluded with the words: "To our absent Brothers."

It is believed that the affiliation several of the members had with the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalos may have influenced the Toast. The RAOB, or Buffaloes as we shall henceforth refer to them, also practiced an 11 o'clock toast in remembrance of the Battle of Hastings in October of 1066. Following his victory, William of Normandy imported a set of rules, both martial and civil in nature, to keep control of a seething Norman-Saxon population always on the edge of a revolution.

Among those rules was a curfew law requiring all watch fires, bonfires (basically all lights controlled by private citizens that could serve as signals) to be extinguished at 11 each night. From strategically placed watchtowers that also served as early fire-alarm posts, the call would go out to douse or shutter all lights and bank all fires. This also served to discourage secret and treasonous meetings, as chimney sparks stood out against the black sky. A person away from his home and out on the darkened streets, when all doors were barred for the night, risked great peril from either evildoers or patrolling militia.

The hour of 11 quickly acquired a somber meaning, and in the centuries that followed, became the synonym throughout Europe for someone on his deathbed or about to go into battle: i.e. "His family gathered about his bed at the 11th hour," or "The troops in the trenches hastily wrote notes to their families as the 11th hour approached when they must charge over the top."

Thus, when the 15 Jolly Corks (of whom seven were not native-born Americans) voted on February 16, 1868, to start a more formal and official organization, they were already aware of an almost universally prevalent sentiment about the mystic and haunting aura connected with the nightly hour of 11, and it took no great eloquence by Vivian to establish a ritual toast similar to that of the Buffaloes at the next-to-last hour each day.

The great variety of 11 O'Clock Toasts, including the Jolly Corks Toast, makes it clear that there was no fixed and official version until 1906-10. Given our theatrical origins, it was almost mandatory that the pre-1900 Elks would be expected to compose a beautiful toast extemporaneously at will. Regardless of the form, however, the custom is as old as the Elks.

Since women were permitted to join the Elks since 1995, the toast is now pronounced as "To our absent Members."

This is the original Elks 11 o'clock Toast thought to be composed by Charlie Vivian for the Jolly Corks and modified for the Elks.

## ***The Original Eleven O'clock Toast of the Jolly Corks***

***Now is the hour when Elkdom's tower  
is darkened by the shroud of night,  
And father time on his silver chime  
Tolls off each moment's flight.  
In Cloistered halls each Elk recalls  
His Brothers where'er they be,  
And traces their faces to well-known places  
In the annals of memory.  
Whether they stand on a foreign land  
Or lie in an earthen bed,  
Whether they be on the boundless sea  
With the breakers of death ahead.  
Whate'er their plight on this eerie night  
Whate'er their fate may be  
Where ever they are be it near or far  
They are thinking of you and me.  
So drink from the fountain of fellowship  
To the Brother who clasped your hand  
And wrote your worth in the rock of earth  
And your faults upon the sand.***

***TO OUR ABSENT BROTHERS***



## ***Todays Eleven O'clock Toast***

***You have heard the tolling of eleven strokes  
This is to remind you that with us the hour of eleven has a tender  
significance***

***Wherever Elks may roam what ever their lot in life may be***

***When this hour falls upon the dial of night***

***The great heart of Elkdom swells and throbs***

***It is the golden hour of recollection***

***The homecoming of those who wander***

***The mystic roll call of those who will come no more***

***Living or dead Elks are never forgotten never forsaken***

***Morning and noon may pass them by***

***The light of day sink heedlessly in the west***

***But ere the shadows of midnight shall fall***

***The chimes of memory will be peeling forth their friendly message***

## ***To Our Absent Members***



### ***"The Elk's Alphabet"***

***(Written on the Elks' Fiftieth Anniversary)***

***By Bro. Raymond A. Browne  
New York Lodge No. 1 BPOE***

***The "A" is for "Altar," where proudly repose  
The Three Precious Symbols that every Elk knows.***

***The "B" is for "Brother, a word that we love;  
It makes us all kin, does the term from Above.***

***The "C" is for "Charity, noblest of deeds;***

It carries a blessing in each of its seeds.  
The "D" is for "Discord" we never have known,  
And "Duty," that bids us to take care of our own.  
The "E" is for "Eleven," the hour of prayer,  
When "Our Absent Brothers" our loving thoughts share.  
The "F" is for "Fidelity," ne'er does it lag;  
Just now it bids us to stand up for our Flag.  
"The "G" stands for "God," the Omnipotent King,  
Whose children we are, and whose praises we sing.  
The "H" is for our "Home," where a welcome awaits,  
The "Wandering Elk" who has come to our gates.  
The "I" is for "Initiate," waiting the words,  
That makes him an Elk, with a place in the herds.  
The "J" is for "Justice," impartial and free,  
Yet tempered with Mercy, as Justice should be.  
The "K" is for "Knowledge," that thrills you and me,  
That all the world honors the "B.P.O.E."  
The "L" is for "Lodges," all over the land,  
About fifteen hundred, and many more planned.  
The "M" is for "Mem'ry," of each bygone prince  
Who helped found our Order, just fifty years since.  
The "N" is the "Nation" of which we're a part,  
And love for it burns bright in ev'ry Elk's heart.  
The "O" is for our "Order," and likewise our "Oath,"  
As long as life last, we'll be faithful to both.  
The "P" is our "Pockets," that we reach in, and quick,  
To help the distressed, and the poor, and the sick.  
The "Q" is the "Queens" of our hearts and our lives,  
Our Mothers, and Sisters, our Sweethearts, and Wives.  
The "R" is "religion," we know only ONE:  
To do good to all, and do evil to none.  
The "S" is the "Star" that looks down from above,  
And sheds on our Altar the radiance of love.  
The "T" is for "Time," with his scythe and his glass;  
He bids us remember, "Do good as ye pass."  
The "U" is the "Unknown," where are Brothers of old,  
Found rest when the story of life was all told.  
And "V" is the "Vision" that sometimes seems plain  
Of that Other World where we'll meet them again.  
The "W" the "Widows" who call not in vain;  
We've helped them before, and we'll help them again.  
"X" that's the "Xample" we set to the world,  
Wherever the standard of Elkdom's unfurled.  
The "Y" is for "Youngsters," for someone has told  
How Elks are all children who never grow old.  
The "Z" is the "Zeal" that we have for the Right;  
The Alphabet's ended; I thank you - Good Night!



## **Famous Elks**

Although the original Elks were actors and entertainers, members of other professions soon joined the organization. Today's Elks represent just about the full spectrum of occupations in America. Throughout the course of the Order's history, many celebrities from the entertainment field, business and public service have been Brother Elks.

Presidents Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy were all Elks. Former President Gerald Ford belongs to Grand Rapids Lodge No. 48, where his father served two terms as Exalted Ruler. Of course, many members of Congress have been Elks, too. Former Speakers of the House Tip O'Neill, Carl Albert, John McCormick and Sam Rayburn all belonged to the fraternity. Former Speaker Tom Foley belongs to Spokane, Washington, Lodge. And the late Hale Boggs of Louisiana was also an Elk.

General John "Blackjack" Pershing, American general and hero of the First World War, hailed from New York Lodge No. 1 as a lifelong member. 70,000 Elks served in the First World War; 1,000 gave their lives in the service of their country. 100,000 Elks served in the Second World War, over 1,600 made the supreme sacrifice for American freedom.

Entertainers Lawrence Welk, Will Rogers, Jack Benny and Andy Devine were Brother Elks, too. Brother Devine served as Exalted Ruler of San Fernando Lodge No. 1539. And Brother Clint Eastwood is a member of Monterey Lodge No. 1285. William F. Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill," was also a Brother Elk. From the sports world, the Order has counted among its members the likes of Vince Lombardi, Casey Stengel, Mickey Mantle, Whitey Ford and Jim Finks.



## **The Elk Colors\***

The Elk colors are Royal Purple and White, a combination deriving its origin from the history of the clergy, nobility and the people. Throughout Europe, the Orient and in Rome, the symbolism of colors was associated with severity of laws and customs.

Each color in each pattern was identified religious, or political, and to change or alter it was a crime of rebellion, a desertion of principles, party or cause. White denotes purity and absolute truth. When combined with Royal Purple it signifies the love of

truth and the highest degree of virtue.

Purple is the badge of Kingship, the color for the robes of Emperors and High Priests, and signifies highest favor. Blending of White and Royal Purple indicates the favor of the people, which bespeaks the status of Elkdom.

\* From "An Authentic History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks," by Charles Edward Ellis.



## **AULD LANG SYNE**

The old Scottish song, "Auld Lang Syne," is the fraternal anthem of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. It has been used in Elk rituals and fraternal occasions for over a century, and it is often sung after the Eleven O'clock toast by Elks and their guests at social functions.



**The organizations below are related to or have stemmed from**

**The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of USA**

**The Benevolent and Patriotic Order of Does**

A group of women of Omaha, Nebraska, wives of Elks, discussed the forming of an order with similar ideals and precepts of the Elks. So enthusiastic did they become that on February 9, 1921, invitations were extended by Mrs. James H. Craddock, to sixty women in Omaha to meet at her home, 3716 Hawthorne Avenue, for the purpose of laying the foundation for the Order.

Although independent, this organization would be in harmony with the Benevolent and Patriotic Order of Elks and organized along similar lines, with its membership to be confined to wives, widows, mothers, daughters, and sisters of Elks. Thirty-two women were present at this first meeting and a temporary organization was formed that day. These women met for six months until Omaha Elks Lodge No. 39 graciously invited the DOES to meet in their Elks Lodge Room. A firm was employed to prepare

the necessary papers and Constitution.

The Grand Lodge was formed and chartered on February 12, 1921 by the State of Nebraska with authority to charter subordinate lodges, called "Droves" These ladies, with the assistance of the Elks, and with the desire to work in harmony with and to always keep uppermost in their minds the idealism of Elkdom, laid the foundation for a permanent organization dedicated to the principles of Patriotism, Charity, Loyalty, and Love.

It was a trust, hope, and ambition that this organization would spread in ever-increasing circles and, in the fullness of time, a Drove of DOES would be in every city where there is an Elks Lodge. The Benevolent, Patriotic Order of Does filled a need for a national women's organization whose members met specified requirements and shared mutual interest with the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

The Officers of a Drove serve annually as follows: Elective: President, First Counselor, Senior Counselor, Junior Counselor, Secretary, Treasurer, Conductor, Inner Guard, Outer Guard, Musician, and three Trustees. Appointive: Chaplain, Assistant Musician, Assistant Conductor, four Color Bearers, and four Attendants.

Membership into our Order is by invitation of a Doe, who is the Proposer. The application must be signed by the Proposer and two Members of the Drove, who are References, as well as by an Elk Sponsor, other than the Applicant, who must be an Elk in good standing. An Applicant must believe in God, be an American citizen, and have attained the age of 21. Additionally, the Order is non-sectarian and non-partisan.



## **The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada**

This Elks order was founded September 26, 1912 and incorporated under a special Dominion of Canada Charter. The first lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada was established in Vancouver, British Columbia. Brother Charles E. Redeker became the first Grand Exalted Ruler (or national president) of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada is the largest all-Canadian fraternal organization in Canada.

Prior to 1912, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of

America had flourished and grown throughout the U.S.A. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada are not affiliated with the American Elks, but share a common history and enjoy a friendly relationship.

In the U.S.A., the Elks began with a group of actors and entertainers led by Charles Algernon Sidney Vivian, an Englishman. They chose the name Elk because of the animal's stately qualities. The framework of the organization was developed at a meeting in New York on February 16, 1868 and spread rapidly becoming one of the most respected and successful organizations in the United States of America. It was only natural to base the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada on such a fine example.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada have grown to over 330 lodges with more than 24,000 members and are committed to our vision of being the most progressive family focused organization in Canada, meeting community and member needs and expectations.

In 1998 a referendum was passed by the membership removing the word male from the Constitution - permitting women to join the Elks.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada still utilize much of their Order's original Initiation Ritual, including the use of a skull, hoodwinks, blackball method of electing candidates to membership, and regalia. The regalia consists of a purple fez, similar to that of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, with a white tassel and an Elk's head represented on the front.

The use of the fez as the official headgear of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada began pursuant to a resolution passed at the 1925 convention held in Montreal, Canada.



## ***The Royal Purple of Canada***

This is the official women's auxiliary to the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada. The Royal Purple was founded on September 11, 1914 and is incorporated under a special Dominion of Canada Charter with the Elks of Canada.

The first Lodge was set up in Vancouver, British Columbia. Working diligently to develop the Organization across Canada, Alice Morrow became the first Supreme Honoured Royal Lady (National President).

Since its inception, the Royal Purple of Canada has grown to over 200 Lodges and



7,000 Members. Membership means you will receive a warm welcome when visiting any Lodge, a network of friends that you can tap into anywhere in Canada. Extending this network farther is our partner Organization, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Canada.

The qualifications to become a Member of the Royal Purple are: Female, sixteen years of age, resident of Canada, supporting democratic and lawful government and the purposes and objects of the Order.

The Members of Royal Purple of Canada focus primarily on the promotion and support of community needs across Canada through Local and National programs. Some of these programs include: The Elks and Royal Purple Drug Awareness Program and The Elks and Royal Purple Literary and Poster Contest, each promoting a drug free lifestyle. The organization has a national charity - the Elks & Royal Purple Fund for Children.



## **Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World**

The ***Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks of the World*** (IBPOEW), was modeled after the BPOE and its stated purpose is, "*that the welfare and happiness of its members be promoted and enhanced, that nobleness of soul and goodness of heart be cultivated, that the principles of charity, justice, brotherly & sisterly love and fidelity be inculcated, that its members and their families be assisted and protected, and that the spirit of patriotism be enlivened and exalted.*"

The IBPOEW was formed in 1898 in Cincinnati, Ohio by B.F. Howard and Arthur J. Riggs, a Pullman porter. They had been denied membership in the all-white BPOE and they were determined to form an organization that granted membership to all qualified individuals without regard to race, creed, or ethnicity. Mr. Riggs was able to obtain a copy of the BPOE ritual and after consultation with an attorney, discovered that it was not copyrighted. Riggs applied for and was granted a copyright of the ritual and on November 17, 1898, the first meeting of the IBPOEW was held.

The IBPOEW's founding brought resentment among members of the BPOE due to the use of their ritual and emblem. Although reconciled to the inevitability of a Black Elk organization, they resented the IBPOEW's use of the BPOE seal. Use of the seal by non-BPOE members was even ruled illegal in New York State in 1906. Sensing an opportunity to improve relations with the BPOE, the IBPOEW Grand Exalted Ruler Armand W. Scott ordered Black Elks to wear an IBPOEW pin and not the BPOE pin,

even though they differed only by the initials engraved over the elk's head at center. This small difference, apparently, was enough and in 1918, the BPOE officially ended its opposition to the IBPOEW. The period of inter-fraternal strife was rendered closed.

Its women's organization, the Daughters of the IBPOEW, is organized in units called "temples."

The IBPOEW presently has approximately 450,000 members in Lodges throughout the U.S.A. and the Caribbean, and also wear fezzes as part of their regalia.



## ***The Supreme Emblem Club of the U.S.A.***

A small group of Elks' ladies began meeting together in 1917 to wrap bandages for American troops during the First World War. They enjoyed the sociability, and at the same time felt the joy of accomplishment. The combination of assisting others and enjoying good fellowship appealed to other women, and a community group came together.

Fifteen members of a group of ladies in Providence, Rhode Island, related to members of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, who were active under the name of Emblem Club, developed the idea of a national organization of such groups. The organization was chartered in the State of Rhode Island as the *Supreme Emblem Club of the United States of America* by Esther A. Sweeney, Mary T. Duffy, Alice Farrell, Mary L. Clark, and Charlotte O'Conner of the "original fifteen", on April 27, 1926, and filed in the office of the Secretary of State of Rhode Island on May 3, 1926.

Nine Emblem Clubs were organized during the first year in the New England States in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut.

This number has steadily increased and now, in more than seventy years of formal existence, Emblem Clubs are located in every section of this country, including Alaska and Hawaii. With this organization continuously progressing, the future of *Emblem* is even more promising.

The Emblem Club attracts individuals of many diverse talents, abilities, and ages, all of whom combine to make Emblem a very special organization. In Emblem there is an important place for each member.

## Insignia

The insignia of the organization, an Elk's head surrounded by a wreath, is used on pins, stationery, publications and banners. This insignia shows that our members are related to or sponsored by members of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America, and cooperates in their endeavors, when invited to do so.

## Adopted Colors

The adopted colors of the Emblem Clubs are Purple and Gold. **PURPLE:** The color of royalty, denotes the highest standards and principles and is used by the Elks with whom our relationship or sponsorship establishes eligibility for membership in the Emblem Club.

**GOLD:** This color is used to signify quality or great value and symbolizes the rich blessings and material means.

## Ritual

The Ritual for the Emblem Clubs was written by officers of the Grand Lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the U.S.A., and was adopted in the early years. The Ritual includes a nondenominational prayer, and a salute to the Flag of the United States of America.

## Membership

An individual must be a citizen of the United States of America and at least eighteen years old. A prospective member must be sponsored by an Emblem Club member and by a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America. An Emblem Club may be recognized as an auxiliary by an Elks Lodge. However, the Lodge has no jurisdiction in the formation, rules, or regulations of the Emblem Club. The Emblem Club is an independent organization. The goodwill and assistance of the members of the Lodge of Elks is most welcome and helpful and cooperation between the Elks and the Emblem Club is most desirable in the interest of progress and harmony. An Emblem member attending a meeting or social event within the Elks Lodge must be governed by and obey the House Rules of the Elks Lodge.

**For more information on the Elks visit the website at:**

<http://www.elks.org/>



***A major portion of this information derived from the  
Phoenixmasonry Masonic Museum  
Salisbury NC Lodge #699 BPOE  
Thousand Oaks Elks Lodge 2477  
Ashland Oregon B.P.O.E. Lodge 944***

### ***Links to History***

***Phoenixmasonry*** <http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/elks.htm>

***Salisbury Lodge #699*** <http://www.salisburyelks.org/Elks%20history/HistoryofElks.doc>

***Salisbury Lodge #699*** <http://www.salisburyelks.org/Elks%20history/miscdocuments/JOLLYCorks.doc>

***Ashland Lodge #944*** <http://ashlandelks.org/history/corks/jollycorks.html>

***Thousand Oaks Lodge #2477*** <http://www.elks2477.com/History/History%20of%20Elks.htm>