

# PAST GRAND EXALTED RULERS OF B. P. O. ELKS FOR LAST SEVEN YEARS



WM. J. O'BRIEN, JR.  
1904-05



ROBERT W. BROWN  
1905-06



HENRY A. MELVIN  
1906-07



JOHN K. TENNER  
1907-08



RUSH L. HOLLAND  
1908-09



JAMES U. JAMIES  
1909-10



AUGUST HERRMANN  
1910-11

## FRATERNITY DEVELOPS FROM HUMBLE ORIGIN

From Small Organization of Actors, the B. P. O. Elks Has Grown Into Powerful Order That Is National Force for Good.

**D**ESIRE for power, for protection, or for social enjoyment, are the basic elements that draw men into banding themselves into parties or associations. Many organizations are inspired only by the thirst for power; others solely for protection, and others still merely for social intercourse. In many associations of men, these elements are combined.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, for instance, has incorporated these elements, protection and social intercourse. It does not seek power, other than the power to do good. It rigidly evades participation in any political or sectarian movements, outside its own zone of endeavor, which is confined to lodge activities alone.

From the first it has clung tenaciously to its ideals—charity, justice, brotherly love, fidelity—and for this reason has mounted higher and higher among similar organizations until today it is looked upon as one of the best of the standard fraternal lodges of the nation and the globe. But this enviable position was not reached without effort. In its 46 years of existence the order has undergone the ordeals of schism, being almost on the verge of dissolution several times only the level heads of its then leaders saved it from strife that could have ended in nothing less than bitterness and division.

The Elks have had civil war and triumphed as a unit. The order has gone through the chaos of conspiracy and emerged unscathed. Above all things banal, it has risen, and true to instincts of the elk, fled to the pastures of peace and harmony. There it has prospered, because its ideals were not forsaken even in the darkest hours of the fraternity's history.

As an order, the B. P. O. E. really dates from March 10, 1871, when the New York legislature enacted a measure incorporating the grand lodge, under the laws of New York. Two days later, the first lodge outside of New York was granted a charter. It was Philadelphia lodge No. 2. The first charter was granted to New York lodge No. 1, the same day the grand lodge was incorporated. Heretofore the order of Elks had existed only as a single organization in New York city. The grand lodge was founded to enable its expansion to other cities.

For three years previous to the institution of the grand lodge, the B. P. O. E. had existed as a lodge. It had evolved from a purely social society, that had gone by the name of Jolly Corks, and whose membership was made up exclusively of men in the theatrical profession, as indeed was the B. P. O. E. during its formative period. Here then is found the real beginning of the lodge. In passing, it may be fitting to mention the fact that the lodge today owes much of its greatness and its estimable aims and objects to the enthusiastic devotion of a few folk, who guided its destinies when the lodge was a lone Elkie, trembling on untried legs.

### The Jolly Corks.

Charles Vivian, an English actor, was the founder of the B. P. O. E., and its first exalted ruler, or right honorable primo, as the head of the lodge was known in the early years. He was the son of an English clergyman and was born in Devonshire, England, in 1842. A splendid entertainer, a man of magnetic personality, he soon won a place in the hearts of his coworkers in America and the theatre going public. He arrived in New York in November, 1867, and two weeks later the Jolly Corks came into being at a boarding house run by a Mrs. Gleason. The Jolly Corks were patterned after a similar organization in London. To become a full fledged "cork" one paid an initiation fee, sufficient to cover the cost of the drinks for every cork present. The initiate was then presented with a cork, which he was to have with him always and was compelled to produce on demand of another cork under a penalty of paying for the drinks. In short, it was simply an association of congenial, fun loving fellows.

Vivian, the leader in all mirth provoking stunts, was the imperial cork. Six other young theatrical men and Vivian decided that they would organize regularly and this was done. In a short time the Corks numbered 58. The idea of making the organization protective as well as social soon crystallized and on February 15, 1868, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks was established. By a narrow margin of one vote the order at this time escaped being named the Benevolent and Protective Order of Buffalos, after the Royal Antislavery Order of Buffalos of England, an ancient benevolent order of which Vivian was a member. Vivian himself was in favor of the name of Buffalos, and on the first ballot, when the vote stood 7 to 7, could have cast the deciding vote but did not. On the next ballot the vote was 8 for Buffalos, 8 for Elk, and Vivian then switched to "Elk," and the name was adopted. Opposition to "Buffalos" was made because certain members felt that something indigenous to the American continent should be chosen. Buffalos is the name of an African animal, although it is freely applied to the American bison. According to Ellis, in his "History

of the Elks," the members of the newly established order then paid a visit to the Cooper Institute, where it was ascertained that their selection had been a happy one. The Elk is an animal that will avoid fight except when the weak members or the females of the herd are endangered. This attribute of the elk therefore was in direct line with the ideals of the order.

### Ritual Is Chosen.

Whole sections of the new lodge's ritual were taken almost word for word from the ritual of the Buffalos of New York, who practically wrote the first Elk ritual. Also the names of the officers were requisitioned. Vivian was elected right honorable primo and presided over two sessions. Then he was called from the city and Richard Sterly, next officer in rank, took his place.

On March 25 a constitution and by-laws, consisting of 15 articles and 41 rules and regulations were adopted. Although this constitution and laws have been changed and amended at various times since, they still form the basis of the Elks' jurisprudence of today.

At that time the aim of the lodge was to extend protection and financial assistance to theatrical men who made up its membership exclusively. Before the first calendar year had ended, however, men engaged in other professions had been admitted. It was seen that the lodge could never grow strong unless this step was taken. A number of actors opposed this, however, and their opposition led to discussions that nearly wrecked the lodge a short time afterward.

On May 24 a committee that had been appointed to draft a second degree ritual reported and conferred the degree upon other brothers. Vivian returned soon after this and took the second degree.

He has been in New York only a few days when an attempt was made to expel him from the lodge, following a quarrel with several members because he and his friends had not been given an opportunity to participate at the first benefit performance. The men who led in this affair favored the proposition to include only theatrical men in the fraternity. The attempt failed and Vivian never reentered the lodge which he had founded. Later he and several of his friends were illegally expelled by this faction which was in power.

Their action in later years was partially rectified by the reinstatement of several of the early Elks, in the lodge and the official recognition of Vivian as the founder of the order, by the grand lodge.

Thus ended the first year's history of the Elks. The organization was established, it had undergone severe strains, but continued to advance. Its membership then numbered 76. At the end of the second year this had increased to 143.

### Birth of the Order.

The date that the Elks as an order embosomed on their banners as the natal year is 1871. During the year one of the biggest steps in its history was taken. A band of "Jolly Corks" had been organized in the Quaker City by Vivian, asked for the privilege of organizing an Elks' lodge there. They were told to "go ahead." It was then found that the proposed Philadelphia lodge could not be known as Elks, America, unless a body governing both the Philadelphia and New York lodges was created. This led to the formation of the grand lodge in New York city, with a membership constituted of the New York lodge members. A preliminary organization was established January 22, and on March 10 the state legislature passed an act incorporating the grand lodge. The same day the grand lodge granted New York a charter, and on March 15 Philadelphia got one also.

For the next five years these two lodges comprised the order. Then in 1875, San Francisco lodge No. 3, Chicago No. 4, and Cincinnati No. 5 joined the herd. Thereafter its expansion was rapid. In 1879 there were 12 lodges scattered throughout the states, with a total of 829 members. Nothing of particular importance occurred until 1886, when an organization in England asked for a charter. The matter was tabled. So far the grand lodge sessions had been held in New York city, with the exception of the convention of '77, which was held at Philadelphia and which reconvened the day following in New York to ratify and legalize all actions taken in the neighboring state. But there were other lodges that favored making the grand lodge migratory. They wanted the honor of entertaining the order. This sentiment grew rapidly despite the opposition put up by the New Yorkers who asserted that the convention could be held only in New York owing to the fact that it was incorporated under the New York statutes.

A semi-crisis was reached at the annual grand lodge convention of '88, when a motion to make the convention migratory was passed. At that time almost 100 lodges belonged to the order. The step of '88 led directly up to

## GRAND EXALTED RULER JOHN P. SULLIVAN



open rebellion in 1890, when New York broke away, followed by several other lodges which sympathized with the stand No. 1 took. The grand secretary, A. C. Moreland, had an injunction issued prohibiting himself from attending the convention that had been called at Cleveland, or forwarding the books of the grand lodge to Cleveland.

Nevertheless the convention was called at Cleveland by the exalted grand ruler, Dr. Simon Quinlin, and Moreland was expelled from the order and the charter of the New York lodge was suspended. Later a trial committee was appointed and No. 1's charter was declared forfeited.

Meantime members of the New York lodge called a convention which met in New York, elected officers and declared the Cleveland convention "clandestine" and illegal.

Joined with them were lodges of Boston, Brooklyn, Newark, Hoboken, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Providence and Buffalo.

But the fraternity was too strong. With 156 lodges and a list of members numbering more than 13,000, the secession did little harm. Quinlin was rejected and Louisville, Ky., was selected as the next site for the convention.

Order Distinctly American.

Another milestone was passed in 1890 when the grand lodge limited the order to the United States and her possessions. Petitions from Canada and Mexico for charters were tabled on the ground that the lodge should first strengthen itself in the United States before going afield.

Eighteen hundred and ninety-one finds

Brooklyn, Buffalo and Newark in allegiance once more with the order. At the annual grand lodge convention of '91 it was decided to hold reunions with the annual grand lodge session. The olive branch was extended, too, to the rebels, and it was allowed to become known that the return of No. 1 to the herd would be welcomed. The indirect invitation was accepted by New York in 1892, but the order had been taught something. It wanted the unquestioned right to meet wherever it pleased. This was accomplished by incorporating under the federal laws as the B. P. O. E. of the United States of America. Moreland was reinstated and plain sailing seemingly was in sight.

order its leaders feared that its standard would deteriorate and to prevent this the grand lodge in 1899 passed a resolution to the effect that no subordinate lodge could be established in communities of less than 5000 inhabitants.

### National Home Established.

Progress toward the protection of unfortunate members was taken in 1900, when the work of selecting a site for the Elks' National home was taken under consideration. This matter was settled in 1902, when the Hotel Bedford property at Bedford City, Va., was purchased for \$12,050. The home was dedicated May 31, 1902, and a per capita tax for its support was levied on the subordinate lodge members.

An idea of the rapid growth of the fraternity is seen in the figures submitted in 1907, showing a membership of 73,000 in the 612 subordinate lodges which then constituted the fraternity.

In 1901 the Elks performed their first big charity. Ten thousand dollars was forwarded to the Galveston lodge to aid the victims of the destructive Galveston flood. The Baltimore fire of 1903 likewise found the pocketbook of the Elks wide open. That year \$16,396 was sent to Baltimore for relief of those made homeless by the big fire, and \$2000 to aid those who suffered from the typhoid fever epidemic at Butler, Pa. The grand lodge in this year took cognizance of several so called Elks' organizations, including negro "Elks" organizations, and declared them unwarranted fakes. This was followed up in 1906 by the institution of court proceedings against the negro order, which

## FOUNDER'S CHARACTER REFLECTED IN B. P. O. E.

Career of Charles A. S. Vivian, Early Curtailed by Death, Was Dedicated to the Happiness of Others--Story of "The Jolly Corks."

**D**ESPITE its rapid growth, the schisms that threatened its disruption soon after its organization, and the struggles undergone to gain a solid footing as an established institution, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks has retained and reflects today the spirit and character of its loved founder, Charles A. S. Vivian.

Brilliant, overflowing with good will toward his fellow man, chivalrous, popular alike with men and women, he went through life spreading sunshine, and died, his passing wept by everybody who knew him.

During his 38 years of life, 13 of them were spent in the United States, during which time he made himself known throughout the east and west. Actor and entertainer, he played in the leading theatres in New York, and in rough hewn log "opera houses" of western mining camps and army posts. And everywhere he was greeted as the leader at the social gatherings he attended. He was a friend of every man and every man was his friend.

But there was a graver side to his nature. He believed in and carried out the principles on which Elksdom is founded—charity, justice, brotherly love, fidelity. These principles were incorporated in the tenets of the lodge which he founded, as the chief elements of the binding members of the fraternity together. How well have they succeeded is seen today in the marvelous spread and growth of the order.

Charles Vivian was born in Exeter, Devonshire county, England, in 1842. His father was a clergyman of the Church of England. His early years were spent quietly. He was given a good general education and even during his student days, showed a natural aptitude for music and the stage. He had reached his majority when his father died, leaving him and his brother George orphaned. The brother went into business and Charles drifted into the dramatic profession.

Possessed of a splendid voice, commanding appearance, a genius for mimicry, and a long memory for witty tales, he soon gained an inevitable position in his chosen field.

But wanderlust, the hunger for adventure and experience in new lands, caused him to turn his face toward America. In 1867 he arrived in New York. He was just out of his teens.

A stranger, he happened into John Ireland's Star music hall at No. 50 Lispenard street, one November night. Ireland's was one of the "free and easy" where liquor was sold while paid and volunteer entertainers kept the people at the tables amused by ballads and dances. Vivian was attired in a peajacket and someone noting his rough garb, thought it a good joke to call upon the young man for a song. Before the night was done, a stranger had been encored a dozen times and had so impressed his auditors that Manager Butler of the American theatre had engaged him for a nightly turn at \$50 weekly. This, in brief, was Charles Vivian's introduction to the United States.

### The "Jolly Corks" Organized.

At Mrs. Gelsman's boarding house, No. 138 Elm street, he met six other kindred souls, actors all, and on November 24, 1867, organized them into the "Jolly Corks" out of which grew the B. P. O. E. three months later, February 15, 1868.

At that time only members of the theatrical profession were admitted to membership. Charles Vivian was elected "Right Honorable Primo," as the exalted ruler was then called. The other officers of the first lodge and the title of their chairs as known then, follow:

Richard R. Sterly, first deputy.  
L. Brown, second deputy.  
James W. Glen, third deputy.  
William Carlton, recording secretary.

William Sheppard, corresponding secretary.  
Harry Vandermark, treasurer.  
William Sheppard, teller.

As Sheppard could not fill two positions, Albert Hall later was made teller.

At that time no ritual was used. On May 17 of that year, however, a ritual, practically all of which was written by

only recently ended in favor of the B. P. O. E.

The year of the great fire and earthquake in San Francisco found the membership of the lodge standing at the 225,000 mark. The terrible holocaust, which caused a great wave of sympathy to encircle the world, likewise went to the big heart of the Elks. Members of the order contributed generously and \$12,000 was forwarded to stricken San Francisco, a gift from the B. P. O. E.

From 1909 to the present year nothing of an epochal nature has transpired. In 1907, June 17, was officially adopted as Flag day, and in 1909 the membership passed 500,000. Today it is almost 400,000 and there are 1235 subordinate lodges in existence. The great majority of these are thriving institutions in the cities where they are located, and the Order of Elks is a gigantic harmonious organization for good and possessor of the good will of the nation at large.

Vivian, was adopted. Previous to this the new order had been almost wrecked by dissension between two factions, one of which favored the admission to membership of men in other professions, and a faction which insisted on a membership chosen exclusively from among the recognized performers of the theatrical profession. The former won, and by its victory, placed the organization on the path which led to success.

About the same time Vivian was declared ineligible for the office of right honorable primo, owing to the fact that he was traveling almost continuously. On May 24, another election was held and new officers elected.

The founder's work had been well done, however. The Elks were firmly established in New York, the alma of the fraternity had been molded, and the seeds of benevolence and good will had been sown in the hearts of the 100 men who then constituted its membership.

Soon after Vivian became homesick for old England and sailed for London. There he remained a short time, playing at various London variety halls. Then the call of the new world brought him back to the United States. He organized a theatrical company and toured the east and middle west, finally arriving at San Francisco.

There he found himself in his element. His acting—entirely comedy work—created a sensation. He was lionized. In speaking of this part of his life, Mrs. Imogen Holbrook Vivian, his widow, who still lives, says that hats, collars, ties and other articles were named after him; so great was his popularity.

He toured the principal cities of the Pacific coast, reaping a golden harvest, and on his return to San Francisco in 1875 he met Imogen Holbrook, of Oakland, who was then making a start as an actress. She played in his comedies, leaving him and his brother George orphaned. The brother went into business and Charles drifted into the dramatic profession.

For the next four years the couple traveled extensively, playing in every important town in Canada and the United States. Sometimes they would work together, giving what was termed "parlor entertainments," which Vivian would alternate by playing comedy parts with the theatrically trained comedians in the bigger cities of the country.

And all the time, the young actor was making large sums of money, which he distributed with a lavish hand. "He was too good a fellow," his friends explained following his demise.

No matter where he remained his magnetic personality made him friends. He counted them by the hundreds, they included Indians met on the frontier, army officers, clubmen, citizens of every class and creed.

### Death Eleven Years Early.

Eighteen and eleven years found him in Philadelphia, but not for long. He had learned to love the west, its wide reaches of open country, its cosmopolitan population, uncomfortable stage coaches and the hectic pulse of a youthful civilization held him in its thrall. His soon was back in Chicago, then St. Louis, next Denver, and then Leadville, Colo. There he and Mrs. Vivian organized a company and played a few nights. They were compelled to close their theatre, however, because they would not allow smoking and drinking during the performance—something that the miners universally demanded at Leadville then.

Soon after Vivian accepted his last position. He was engaged at the Woods' theatre for a song and dance turn. There he contracted a severe cold. Seemingly realizing that the end was near, he told his wife that he would never live to leave Leadville. Three weeks later, the morning of March 20, 1880, he died of pneumonia.

His funeral was held at the Taber opera house. The town turned out en masse to honor his memory. With muffled drums, the bands marched behind the casket, playing dirges, while every available playing in the town was pressed into service to carry citizens to the cemetery.

Thus ended the life of Charles Vivian, founder of the B. P. O. E. His body lies at Elks' Rest, at Mt. Hope cemetery, Boston. The body was removed from Leadville by the grand lodge of Elks, and reinterred at Elks' Rest, April 25, 1889.

In her biography of her husband, Mrs. Vivian sums up his character in these words: "The greater part of Charles Vivian's life was spent in endeavors to make others happy. He sacrificed himself professionally and financially upon the altar of the club and social circle. In being able to give others pleasure, he best pleased himself; with all his brilliancy and his talent, in money matters he was like a child and as fully irresponsible. He instinctively obeyed the scriptural injunction, 'take no thought for the morrow.' He was always a leader, never a follower. Frigid caution, with calm measured step, had no place in the formula of his rare spirit. Spontaneous, warmth of feeling and confidence in those about him were dominant characteristics of his nature."