



1878-1898

Growing Pains

THE PERIOD FROM 1878 to 1898 was one of explosive growth for the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and it was coupled with some excruciating growing pains. Two major crises in five years rocked the Order, pitting brother against brother and threatening to split the Order in two; however, good sense and strong fellowship prevailed, and the Elks emerged from these two decades stronger than ever.

Early in the period, with only ten lodges in the Order, members saw the need to create a more businesslike leadership. The grand secretary's salary was increased to eighty dollars in 1879, and the 1880 Grand Lodge Session called for the establishment of a formal business office that would be under the direction of the grand secretary. The man trusted to lead this office was Grand Secretary Arthur Moreland, who was elected in 1881 and held the office until 1890. His competence was rewarded in 1883 with a salary of \$1,000, which was raised again in 1889 to \$2,500.



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As Grand Secretary from 1881 to 1890, Arthur Moreland was entrusted with creating the first professional business office for the growing Order.

With the Order growing at a remarkable rate, this professional administration was badly needed. The number of lodges more than tripled between 1881 and 1885, going from eleven lodges to thirty-four lodges, and then more than tripled again by 1889. As the number of lodges grew, smaller cities such as Utica, New York; Peoria, Illinois; and Saint Joseph, Missouri, joined the Order's embrace. Rules were devised to determine if a proposed new lodge was impinging on the territory of an existing lodge, and in 1892, Pennsylvania became the first state assigned two district deputy grand

exalted rulers, one for the eastern portion of the state and one for the western portion.

In 1890, the first formal set of requirements for membership in the Order were added to the statutes. Among the requirements was the stipulation that candidates should be at least twenty-one years of age. In 1892, the statutes were amended to stipulate that a candidate must be able to profess “a belief in a Supreme Being.”

Other changes during this period included the institution of the annual Memorial Service on the first Sunday in December. This was approved in 1889. The adoption of a traveling card, or membership card, for admission to Elks lodges nationally was added in 1889, and the second degree of initiation was abolished in 1891, resulting in the single membership that now exists. There was also a shift in the Order’s charitable focus to include support of the community. The first national response to a local disaster came in 1889, when Elks nationwide assisted the victims of a flood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and a devastating fire in Seattle, Washington.

As the membership of the Order grew and expanded into smaller towns and into new areas of the country, the nature of the average Elk changed. What had once been an Order made up primarily of theatrical professionals, along with a handful of businessmen, gradually changed into an organization whose membership was predominantly drawn from people with a variety of occupations. A telling sign of the change came in an 1892 Grand Lodge decision banning lodges from holding regular meetings or social events on Sundays (although lodges that had previously held Sunday meetings were eventually granted a dispensation to continue them if they so chose).

Throughout the 1880s, Elks from the midwestern lodges lobbied for the annual Grand Lodge Session to be held in various locations, instead of in New York only; these demands were turned down every year, until 1888, when the Grand Lodge voted to make the annual session migratory. The first session to be held outside of New York under these rules was the twenty-sixth session in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1890. But the controversy had only begun.

The New York Lodge, backed by Grand Secretary Moreland, sued in New York state court to block the Cleveland session from being

The Death of Charles Vivian

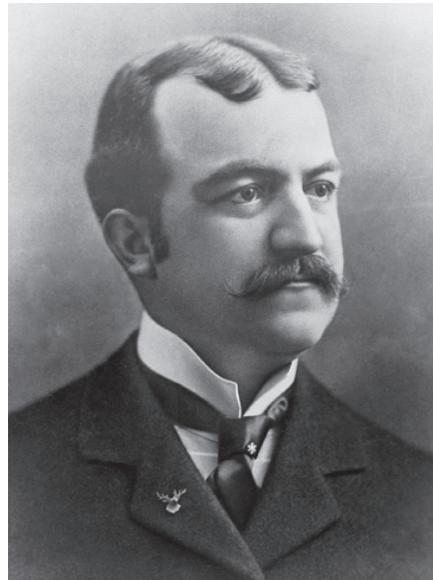
Charles Vivian, founder of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, died of pneumonia in Leadville, Colorado, on March 20, 1880, while on tour in the Rocky Mountains. His passing attracted national attention and elicited lengthy obituaries in major newspapers. Vivian’s grave, however, quickly fell into neglect, and by 1889, it was reported that he had for a headstone only a wooden board with his name scratched in it by a nail. Upon learning of this, the Boston Lodge paid to have Vivian’s remains transferred to the Elk’s Rest in Mount Hope Cemetery, Boston, where he was reinterred on April 28, 1889.

held, on the grounds that the Order had been incorporated under New York law and could not enact any legal decisions in any other location. In return, the Grand Lodge suspended the charter of New York Lodge No. 1 and expelled Moreland from the Order. A handful of northeastern lodges initially supported the New York Lodge, but that support quickly waned, and the New York Lodge was left to stand alone in defiance. Finally, a chastened New York Lodge and Past Grand Secretary Moreland applied for readmission during the 1893 Grand Lodge Session in Detroit, and they were accepted back into the Order.

Because an act of the 1893 session authorized the grand trustees to “expunge and eliminate from the proceedings . . . anything of a vituperative character reflecting upon any member of Grand Lodge,” it is not clear what else transpired during the 1893 session. What is known is that the Grand Exalted Ruler led an effort to reduce the grand secretary’s salary and that the session closed without agreeing on a site for the 1894 gathering. That decision was left up to the grand trustees, who chose Atlantic City, New Jersey, as the site of the 1894 Grand Lodge Session.

A serious problem arose, however, when Grand Exalted Ruler Astley Apperly instead called a session for Jamestown, New York, on the same day. A flurry of communications went out across Elksdom in confusion and resulted in a nearly even split in the Order: 193 Grand Lodge members, representing 80 lodges, attended the session in Atlantic City, and 135 members, representing 85 lodges, traveled to Jamestown instead. Each of these sessions elected a full slate of officers, admitted several new lodges into the Order, and made other statutory changes. To settle the question of which session was legitimate, both parties returned to court. A court ruled in favor of the grand trustees and the Atlantic City session, and subsequently, leaders of both factions searched for a way to heal the Order.

The compromise that was agreed upon recognized the legitimacy of the Atlantic City session and held blameless any Elks who had attended the session in Jamestown. The deal was sealed with the arrival of Meade Detweiler, the Jamestown faction’s leader, at the 1895 session, which was also held in Atlantic City. Detweiler clasped hands with Grand Exalted Ruler



Meade Detweiler brought an end to a divisive period in the BPO Elks’ history by swearing allegiance to Grand Exalted Ruler Edwin Hay at the 1895 Grand Lodge Session and was later elected to two terms as Grand Exalted Ruler.

Edwin Hay as the assembled Elks sang “Auld Lang Syne.” Detweiler swore allegiance to the Grand Exalted Ruler and told the assembled Elks how proud he felt “to lead this vast herd of Elks by the still waters of peace, and with you write all the faults on yonder countless sands and their virtues on the tablets of love and memory.”

Both Detweiler and Moreland continued to contribute to the Order. Detweiler was elected Grand Exalted Ruler in 1896 and was then reelected to that office in 1897. Moreland went on to serve as the editor of the *Elks-Antler*, one of the most influential publications of the Order, and was the first to suggest that the US flag be added to the Elks altar in 1896.

As the start of the twentieth century drew near, the Elks had grown from 820 members in 10 lodges to 44,252 members in 442 lodges. More importantly, the Order had come through two significant crises and was stronger and more unified than ever. It was also well prepared to assume a much larger role on the national stage in the new century. ■