

Aspen Elks Lodge #224

Aspen, Colorado

Established: December 27, 1891

The Aspen Elks Lodge #224 was established on December 27th, 1891. The DDGER of Denver Lodge #17 initiated twenty-two members into the newly established Lodge. After initiation, the officers were elected, and Charles R. Bell became the first Exalted Ruler. Dues were set at \$2.00 a month and \$20.00 for the initiation fee.

The site of the first Lodge was on Durant Street and was formally a jail. The Lodge was moved to Armory Hall (the current City Hall), in 1892. The year 1892 was significant in the history of Aspen because of the demonetizations of silver. This resulted in the economic decline of Aspen and the end of mining as the primary industry.

In 1904, the Elks moved to their present location; although, they could not afford the purchase of the building until January 1916.

Noteworthy events during the first half of the twentieth century were the following. In 1913, 25 head of elk were shipped to Aspen, and members with ranches donated hay to feed the elk. Thus, elk were returned to their former habitat. In December 1918, the first Turkey Roll was held, a tradition that is still going strong today. In 1903, a committee of five members were appointed to arrange for and call a meeting of representatives from all the Lodges in the state. This was the genesis of the formation of the Colorado



Elks Association. In 1921, a Community Welfare Committee was appointed to represent the Lodge in all matters pertaining to the good of the area. This tradition is still carried out today; however, it is distributed amongst our Trustees, Youth Activities Committee, Scholarship Committee, and various other committees.

The Scholarship Program is a prime example of our growth in the benevolent endeavors of our Lodge. In 1974, Exalted Ruler Charles "Skip" Ela presented the first Elks scholarship; one student received \$1,000.00. In 2004, Exalted Ruler Brian O'Neil presented 18 scholarships for a total of \$79,000.00. In just 30 years, our Lodge has increased its scholarship grants by \$78,000.00.

Throughout the history of our Lodge, patriotism has held a prominent place. The Aspen Elks still continue this tradition, as is evidenced in their work with Veterans, Disabled Veterans, and the recent renovation of Ute Cemetery, with the emphasis on the restoration of Civil War Veterans gravesites and Memorial and Veterans Day activities.

Today the Aspen Lodge #224 continues its work with senior citizen luncheons, sponsors of youth programs (both

athletic and academic), and involvement with community programs. The Aspen Lodge has always played a part in our

community, and, today, the involvement with the community is greater than ever.