

# ELKS

## Legacy With AOIP

Dr. James E. Mills, Grand Organizer then for Mr. B.F. Howard [co-founder and Grand Exalted Ruler of the Brothers of Elks].

This "small number of ladies" consisted of Emma V. Kelley, Julia Fraction, Mary P. Barnes, Mamie E. Hodges, Elizabeth Johnson, Laura Henry, Frances Young, Sarah Roberson, Annie Spencer, Malinda Roy, Sarah Armstrong, Joanna Herring and Fannie Hicks. All of these women were from the Norfolk area. The group became known as Norfolk Temple #1. (The men head "lodges" and women head "temples" in Elkdom.)

Emma Kelley did not desire simply a secret fraternal organization. She wanted an organization which would teach people the true meaning of "togetherness." She was most concerned that women should have the opportunity to be better mothers, better homemakers and better citizens.

Although all the women expressed enthusiasm and great hopes for the future, the group disbanded after three months. Emma Kelley, however, realizing that "failure is only in the mind" and that the Elks had a wonderful mission not only for men but also for women, called another meeting on October 25. With only three members present, she organized—for a second time—the first Temple, Norfolk #1. Daughter Mary P. Barnes was chosen Daughter Ruler; Daughter Emma Kelley, secretary; and Daughter Julia Fraction, treasurer.

Due to the undaunted nature of this determined lady, on the third Sunday in July, 1903, the Daughters celebrated their first anniversary at St. John's AME Church. There were 40 members present. Other Temples followed. This expansion to include women is still recognized by many as one of the most significant achievements

in the history of Black Elkdom.

Thus, Emma V. Kelley—like Martin Luther King Jr.—was a visionary and "teacher of mankind" who should serve as an inspiring role model of determination, single-mindedness and faith that justice and equity is possible for us today.

Following the meeting of the Grand Lodge at Hampton, Virginia—with the blessing of Grand Exalted Ruler Howard—a Grand Temple was held at Bassett's Academy on September 9, 1903. The following temples were represented: Norfolk Temple #1 (Norfolk, Virginia), Birmingham Temple #2 (Birmingham, Alabama), Western Star Temple #3 (Washington, Pennsylvania), and Beulah Temple #4 (Berkley, Virginia).

The following Grand Officers were elected: Mary P. Barnes (Norfolk), Grand Daughter Ruler; Dora Fuller (Berkley), Grand Vice Daughter Ruler; Margaret Chatman (Washington, Pennsylvania), Grand Chaplain; Eliza England (Birmingham), Grand Assistant Daughter Ruler; Emma V. Kelley (Norfolk), Grand Secretary; Malinda Roy (Norfolk), Grand Organist; Sarah Armstrong (Norfolk), Grand Daughter Knight; Mary Stevens (Berkley), Grand Gatekeeper; E.F. Sneed, Fannie Hicks (Norfolk) and Edith Brandy (Washington, Pennsylvania), Grand Trustees.

Jealousies of achievement always exist, and, as should be expected the efforts of the Daughters were sometimes derided by the Brothers. Of this period, Daughter Kelley said:

We suffered hardships and abuses, almost ashamed to call ourselves Elks. But we withstood only by taking God

for our guide and these loving words to cheer us even through the dark watch of the night,

*"I have overcome, put your trust in me and I shall be with you even to the end."*

At this meeting, Daughter Kelley was appointed to draw up the first constitution and the first degree rites. She began to compose promotional pamphlets about the organization. These pamphlets contained the history of the Daughters of Elks, the reasons for its foundation and explained in very clear detail the principles of the organization: charity, justice, sisterly love and fidelity.

Charity was defined as the complete willingness to help others who may be in difficulties of any kind. This principle of charity has continued to be the main thrust of the programs of the organization. It is basic to everything the Daughters do.

As envisioned by the Founder,

The sole purpose of the Grand Temple is to unite all [of our] women of sound bodily health and good moral character; to give moral and material support and elevate its members; and to put women in touch with one another, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico; and to extend our borders into the isles of the Sea, and if possible join hands with our sisters on the shores of Africa.

As expected of almost all noteworthy efforts, the organization progressed slowly at first, but the women who joined the Order were enthralled by the idea of an organization that would give them an opportunity to work and to be of service in

many directions in their community.

A cause that had charity as its foundation—something that they could understand and accept—became a powerful force drawing women into the organization over the years. It was the same cause that later was to build the organization in most of the states, the District of Columbia, the Bahama Islands and Canada.

### Gigantic Birth Pains Surface

**F**ROM the beginning of the organization in 1902 to 1907, the work of increasing the temples proceeded. In 1905, Rev. John H. Gray was appointed Grand Chief of the Women's Department.

This period also saw the first "almost disastrous" schism which appeared in the Order. The parent body, of which Emma Kelley was Grand Secretary, sought a peaceful end to the division, but more years would pass before her determined leadership would see the divided factions united under one head.

### Racism Also Enters

**I**N April 1906, a Black Elk, who was engaged in organizing a lodge in Yonkers, New York, was arrested for wearing an Elk emblem. He claimed that he was a member of the Improved Benevolent Order of Elks of the World. The presiding judge declared that only bona fide members of an order could wear its emblem and found the Black man guilty.

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## Ourselves Up By Our Own Bootstraps"...A Series