

# History Happenings

## *In Preparation of #9's 150th Anniversary*

December 2025 - Issue 41

*Charter Received December 8, 1878*



By the mid-1990s, St Louis Lodge #9 was experiencing severe cash flow problems. A new line of credit was established which helped pay the bills in a timely manner but did little to solve the funding issues for roof and air conditioner problems, needed pool pump and filter system replacements, necessary drive-way repair and maintenance, let alone the desire for office space and a basement kitchen. A major capital fund raising campaign was a potential solution. Other potential solutions involved selling the 12481 Ladue Rd. property and moving elsewhere. The one "move opportunity" that gained the most attention was a near simultaneous bid from a developer to buy 12481 Ladue Rd. for \$1,350,000 (approximately \$2,600,000 in today's valuation) and an offer from Robinwood West Swim Club, (approximately 6 miles as the crow flies from 12481 Ladue Rd., situated west of 270 and south of Mason Rd.) to take over, improve and operate their swim club. In the opinion of Lodge Trustees, the Robinwood complex was more than suitable for #9's current and future needs. At the time, the 1960's built sub-division had one-hundred dues paying members of its Association that assumedly would become dues paying Elks.



*Image: Robinwood West Community Center, 12556 Merrick Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146*

The proceeds from the sale of 12481 Ladue Rd. were to be placed in a restricted fund, only to be used for major additions or possible future moves, thus providing a sound financial future for the lodge. Specifically, no more than \$600,000 was to be spent to improve the new location with the \$750,000 balance put into a trust. On July 1, 1997, by a show of hands, the membership of #9 voted down the sale of 12481 Ladue Rd. by less than 10 votes, making the potential move to Robinwood null and void. Although the Robinwood offer seemed impractical operationally, the switch from Ladue Rd to Robinwood would have given #9 a state-of-the-art Elks Lodge on some or all of the 8 acres of underdeveloped Robinwood land and financial security.

# Eternally an Elk

## The #9 Notables at Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum

Many prominent St. Louisans interred at Bellefontaine were also Lodge #9 members.

Thanks to Sandy Schneider, Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum volunteer researcher.

### **D. Joel E. Myers, 1875 - 1946**

#### **Dentist, 'Secret Santa'**

*This is a special holiday update of Dr. Myers, who we first met in March 2024.*

It is heart-warming to hear of someone doing good deeds for less fortunate children. But when the person does so anonymously, it makes the deed even more noteworthy.

Joel Myers was born in Springfield, Illinois in 1875, the fifth child of immigrant parents from Prussia. After his father died, Joel and his extended family lived with his sister and brother-in-law. But Joel would strike out for St. Louis, where he studied to be a dentist.

By 1900, Joel was a boarder while beginning his practice. He married Jessie Michels, and soon they had a baby girl. Times must have been difficult, because in 1905 the marriage ended in divorce. Jessie claimed neglect. She was awarded custody of their daughter Virginia, and \$40 a month from Joel. That equates to about \$1,400 purchasing power today.



*Image: ChatGPT, 12.11.2025. Vintage Toys and Children.*

In 1911 Joel was staying in rooms near or adjoining his office in the Shubert-Rialto Building. The Princess Theatre was downstairs. During Christmas week, a play called "The Toy Shop" was being performed. Joel suggested to the manager that some poor children might really enjoy seeing this, too. The manager agreed. So, Joel arranged for 50 children from the Jewish Orphans' Home to see the play free of charge. Joel bought each child a nickel bag of sugared popcorn. When he saw the children's faces, he was completely won over.

"They were having such a wonderful time," he said years later. "So, I just naturally fell into the habit of giving a party each year." For the next five years, he did just that without telling many people about it.

Each year the party grew. Joel would spend hours each day for several weeks, driving his car to poor neighborhoods and near the shanty houseboats along the river, inviting children to his Santa Claus party.

Myers made all the arrangements for the big day, which greatly limited his practice during the time leading to the party. Some of his friends at the Elks Lodge donated money to him when they found out what he was doing, yet Joel continued to personally do all the preparation work. The Women's Chamber of Commerce became aware, so they volunteered to bring the children to the Arcadia Dance Hall, donated for the party by its management. The festivities culminated with a special performance at the Missouri Theatre, also donated by the management. For fourteen years this joyful tradition continued.

But in 1926, Joel had to sell his car, which would make organizing his party almost impossible. In an interview with the Post-Dispatch, he apologized for not being able to hold the party. He knew it would be a big disappointment to the kids, and to himself. But he promised to hold a party the following year.

A search of the December 1927 local newspapers did not show Dr. Joel Myers' name or his Santa Party. Instead, Elks Lodge #9 entertained hundreds of orphans at the Missouri Theatre.



**SAVE THE DATE January 17, 2026**

*History Committee Trivia Night*

*This month's 1904 World's Fair trivia question:*

*In 1904, 'The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up' premiered in London. Today, the script is known as what?*

**2000 Children in Humble Homes Miss Dr. Joel E. Myers' Christmas Festival Given for 14 Years.**

Some 2000 children in humble homes will have a duller Christmas this year because Dr. Joel E. Myers sold his automobile.

They had wondered why he had not been around this year, to invite them to his annual Christmas party at Arcadia dance hall, 2217 Olive street. To get the answer a Post-Dispatch reporter visited the dentist today at his offices in the Shubert-Rialto Theater Building, where for 14 years he annually arranged for the "biggest Santa Claus party" in the Grand-and-Olive vicinity.

"It's a disappointment to them. I know," Dr. Myers said regretfully. "It's a disappointment to me, and friends of mine over at the Elks Club, offering their usual \$5 or \$10 toward the expenses, have replied when I said it was all off this year. 'Why not?' I'll double my contribution."

**Others Don't Aid in Work.**

"But when I tell them, 'Fine, help me do some of the work, I haven't got any friends.' With the automobile it always took me nine weeks to make all the arrangements, and search through the poorer districts and along the river banks where there live in houses, houses for children who might not have any Christmas."

That left the dentist about 20 minutes or an hour a day to spend on his profession. And without the automobile, he said, it would take about five months instead of nine weeks.

Dr. Myers gave his first party in 1911. His office was in the same building then as now, and the Princess Theatre was downstairs. "The Toy Shop" was on the stage Christmas week. "Why not let some kids see it free?" Dr. Myers suggested to the late Dan Flahell, who was manager of the theater then. "They'd like it," Flahell thought, so, too. "My first party cost me \$25," Dr. Myers related. "I bought a 5-cent package of sugared popcorn for each of 50 children from the Jewish Orphans' Home."

**Tell Into the Habit.**

"While they were out in front I peeped through the curtain, and

**No Fun This Christmas.**

—By a Post-Dispatch Staff Photographer  
**DR. JOEL E. MYERS.**

my. They were having a wonderful time. So I just naturally fell into the habit of giving a party each year."

There was no party in the wartime year, and this would have been the fifteenth. Members of the Women's Chamber of Commerce would bring children to the Santa Claus party about 12:30 p.m. Christmas eve. The Arcadia management gave the use of the hall. At 2 p.m. the party would move over to the Missouri Theatre for a special performance, the gift of the management.

**Few Knew About Parties.**

Dr. Myers, who said he would rather not say anything about what he did in 1911, before it became generally known—said his friends relieved him of about half the expense, which he figured at \$1 for each child. Last year, at the year before, 2500 children were entertained.

"My practice held me too closely to my office this year to accomplish anything without the automobile," Dr. Myers said. "But next year we're going to do it again, and we're going to have 3000 children."

Image: St. Louis Post Dispatch 12.24.1926.  
Retrieved Newspapers.com



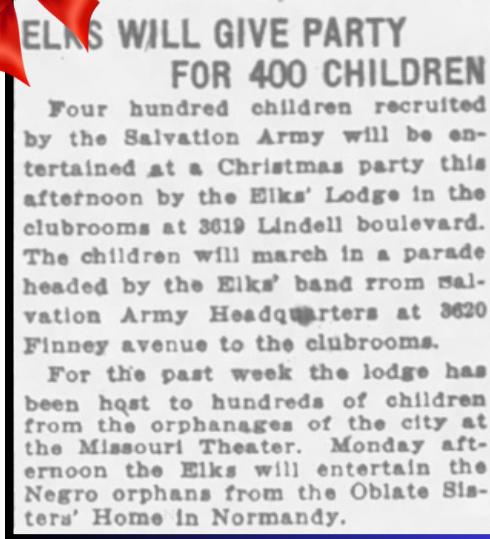


Image: St. Louis Post Dispatch 12.23.1927  
Retrieved: Newspapers.com



Image: ChatGPT, 12.11.2025.  
Children at a holiday party, circa 1920



It seems the Lodge continued the tradition started by its member who had wished to be a secret Santa. Their holiday charity also grew, with members transporting the children to more events, and providing baskets of food and holiday treats to needy families.

Dr. Joel Myers kept his dental office in the same building for many years and resided in adjoining rooms. In 1946, when he was 71 years old, he took a trip to Ste. Genevieve, MO, and suffered a fatal heart attack. His body was returned to St. Louis, where the Lodge managed his funeral at Elks REST in Bellefontaine Cemetery. Local newspapers posted about Joel's death, and that his holiday parties brought joy to so many children in need.



Image: ChatGPT, 12.11.2025.  
Santa with Children circa 1920.

# Elks REST Elsewhere

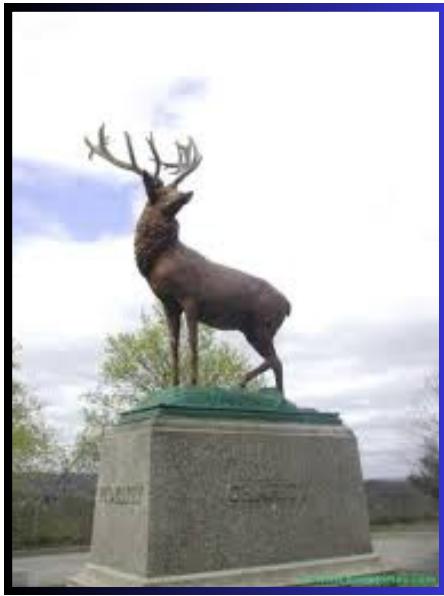


Image: Elmwood Park Elks REST

The Elmwood Park/Paterson New Jersey Elks Lodge #60 was chartered in 1887. According to the February 1, 1932 edition of The Paterson Morning Call, “the dedication of The Elmwood Park/Paterson Lodge Elks REST marked what really was the first notable event in the history of the Paterson Lodge of Elks.”

The May 28, 1907 Elmwood Park/Paterson Elk REST dedication turned out to be a civic event with local buildings and homes decorated for the event and thousands of local non-members observing the entire agenda which began with a parade from lodge to cemetery and ended with numerous orations after the monument was unveiled.

A platform to accommodate 1000 people was erected at the REST, but such a platform turned out to be severely inadequate. Distinguished guests included Grand Exalter Ruler Meade Detweiler and Past Grand Exalted Ruler Edwin Hays. In the evening, the Elmwood Park/Paterson Lodge held a “monster banquet” to which all Elks were guests.

The day following the dedication, The Paterson Morning Call reported; “Surmounting the loftiest elevation of Laurel Grove cemetery and silhouetted against the sky to the eyes of anyone down in the valleys for miles around, stands majestically the life-size bronze Elk which marks the plot of what is known as “Elks REST.” A monument that is presumed will last for generations.” Twenty-five years later, The Morning Call reported that “Elks from all parts of the country who have paid a visit to Paterson have made it a point to visit the monument as it is generally considered to be one of the finest of the sort in existence, and there are many of the kind.”

On May, 25, 2025, members of Elmwood Park / Paterson Lodge #60 honored their Elk REST with a rededication.



Looking for a gift for the person that has everything?  
Consider gifting a personalized brick in the  
**#9 Heritage Courtyard**  
Honor family & friends with a commemorative brick.  
See the order form on the following page.

# "Restoring the St. Louis ELKS REST" Brick Campaign

The Elks REST at Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum is the final resting place for 33 of our brethren. Since the 1890's, the Elks REST monument has watched over this sacred spot. Now, worn and weathered by time and the elements, it seems appropriate to restore the Elks' Rest to its original stately appearance.

By replacing the damaged Elk, improving the individual markers, and tending to the landscaping, we can move forward with certainty that we are doing all we can to honor our fellow Elks.



To achieve that goal, the History Committee has launched a fundraising campaign to build a 'Heritage Courtyard' at the base of the Elk guarding the entrance of Lodge #9. Bricks are 4" x 8" and are available two colors Nutmeg (\$125) or premium option Regimental Red (\$150).

Each brick will be engraved with the name(s) or phrase(s) of your choice; 3 lines of text, 20 characters per line.\*

For questions, please contact Beth Schnettler - [beth12523@gmail.com](mailto:beth12523@gmail.com).

To place an order, complete this form and send with payment to Elks Lodge #9, 12481 Ladue Road, Creve Coeur, MO 63141, attention Beth Schnettler.

Make checks payable to "Elks Lodge #9" with the note "Elks REST Brick Campaign" on the memo line. Payment can also be made through the Club Room Bar register.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 3: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*The History committee reserves the right to assess all orders to ensure all words and phrases used are appropriate for placement on the Lodge grounds.*

