

Way We Were  
July 13, 2016  
Jolly Good Time in Elkdom  
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The Benevolent Protective Order of Elks, or Elks for short, was originally founded in New York City in the 1860s. Park City established a lodge in November 1901. It was one of several fraternal organizations in town and served an important function in the lives of Parkites by providing social opportunities as well as insurance benefits for its members. The Park City Lodge #734 was a large and active one from the beginning with many well known members including Jim Don, city justice, and Sam Raddon, editor and publisher of the Park Record.

In 1914, the local lodge began organizing a trip to Denver, Colorado for the Elks National Convention. In February and March of that year, the Elks held “big and enthusiastic” meetings to discuss plans. Chairman of the Denver committee Oscar Forslund reported “enthusiasm galore” and suggested that “Utah Elks will be much in evidence” at the convention.

Elks lodges from around Utah banded together to arrange a special train for the journey. The committee endorsed a proposed route via the Rio Grande, Colorado Midland, and Santa Fe for the trip to Denver with a return via the Union Pacific. Lodge #734 invited friends to join the trip and advertised the excursion extensively in the Park Record. The event was to be the biggest “ever known in Elkdom” and Denver to be “the greatest convention city in the west.”

At 1:30 pm on July 10, 1914, the “Park City Elks Denver Special” pulled out of the station bound for Colorado, stopping first in Salt Lake City, where Parkites met up with the rest of the Utah delegation which included lodges from Salt Lake and Provo. Eleven days later Forslund was the first to return from the trip, “filled to overflowing with stories of the good time enjoyed and the loyal treatment received.” The Utah delegation was in the “spotlight of popularity” for the entire convention, even winning two awards during the traditional annual convention parade. The first, for their float, amounted to \$250; the second, for “most unique uniform,” was for \$100.

Park City Elks had won such honors once before, in 1902 when the national convention was in Salt Lake City. That year, nearly 100 local Elks accompanied by the Park City Military Band marched dressed as prospectors “in deference to the chief industry of the camp.” Lodge #734 rounded out the parade as the last entry but apparently surprised and delighted the crowd with their display. Comments such as, “There goes the prize money,” were heard as the delegation passed. Miners were not an unfamiliar sight to Utahns, but the costumes “awakened...much interest in mining” amongst many of the “eastern visitors” in particular.

The 1914 delegation was proud to have revived the honor of their predecessors. Upon their return two days after Forslund, the rest of the Denver travelers had “the same story of a jolly good time.”



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Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Fraser Buck Collection

Caption: Elks members and friends of the Park City Lodge #734 pose with members of the Denver lodge while attending the Elks National Convention in Denver on July 13, 1914. A newspaper article noted that Parkites dressed in white and purple.