

LeRoy Moose Club - A Century Of Giving

by Lynne Belluscio

The LeRoy Moose Club was founded in 1914, when fifty men met in the meeting room on the second floor of Maloney Hall on the corner on Bank Street.

The origin of the Loyal Order of Moose goes back to 1888 in Louisville, Kentucky when Dr. John Henry Wilson founded a men's social club. Lodges were soon founded in Cincinnati, St. Louis and Crawfordsville and Frankfort in Indiana. But it didn't seem to catch on, and in the fall of 1906, only the Indiana lodges remained.

Then in October of that year, James J. Davis became a member of the Order. Davis was an interesting man. He was a Welsh immigrant who worked in the steel mills of Pennsylvania and became an active labor organizer. He saw the Order of the Moose as a way to provide a social safety net for the working class. He decided to recruit members and establish lodges throughout the United States and Canada.

At the 1911 Convention in Detroit, Davis suggested that the Loyal Order of Moose acquire property for a school that would provide schooling and vocational training for orphans. The school would be built west of Chicago and would become known as



Mooseheart. The Loyal Order of Moose assumed the financial support of the new school.

By 1912, James Davis and a group of organizers had recruited half a million members and established 1,000 lodges in the United States and Canada. Lorie Matla, who has written a book about the LeRoy Lodge believes that it was James Davis who was in LeRoy

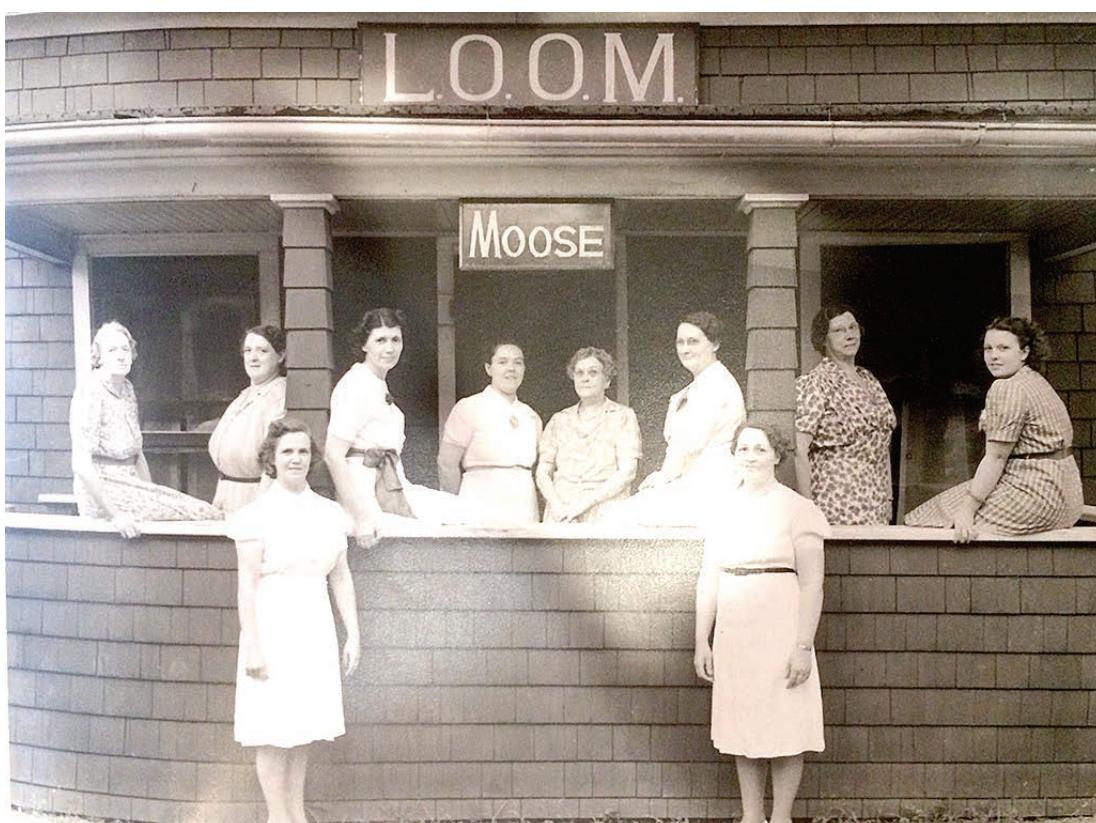
in 1914 at the time the LeRoy Lodge was chartered.

(James Davis served as United States Secretary of Labor from 1921 to 1930 under Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover. He then was elected to the United States Senate where he served as the Pennsylvania Senator from 1930 to 1945.)

The LeRoy Lodge met in vari-

ous locations around the Village, but eventually purchased property on Bank Street where the present building stands. By 1947, the Lodge had 500 members. On May 11, 1950, the Moose Club dedicated the Statue of Liberty to the Boy Scouts. It was one of 200 that were dedicated in celebration of the 40th birthday of the Boy Scouts.

Today, about 100 of the statues remain. The LeRoy Lodge also supports Moosehaven, a retirement home in Orange Park, Florida. Today, the local lodge has over 300 members who raise money for community activities.



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