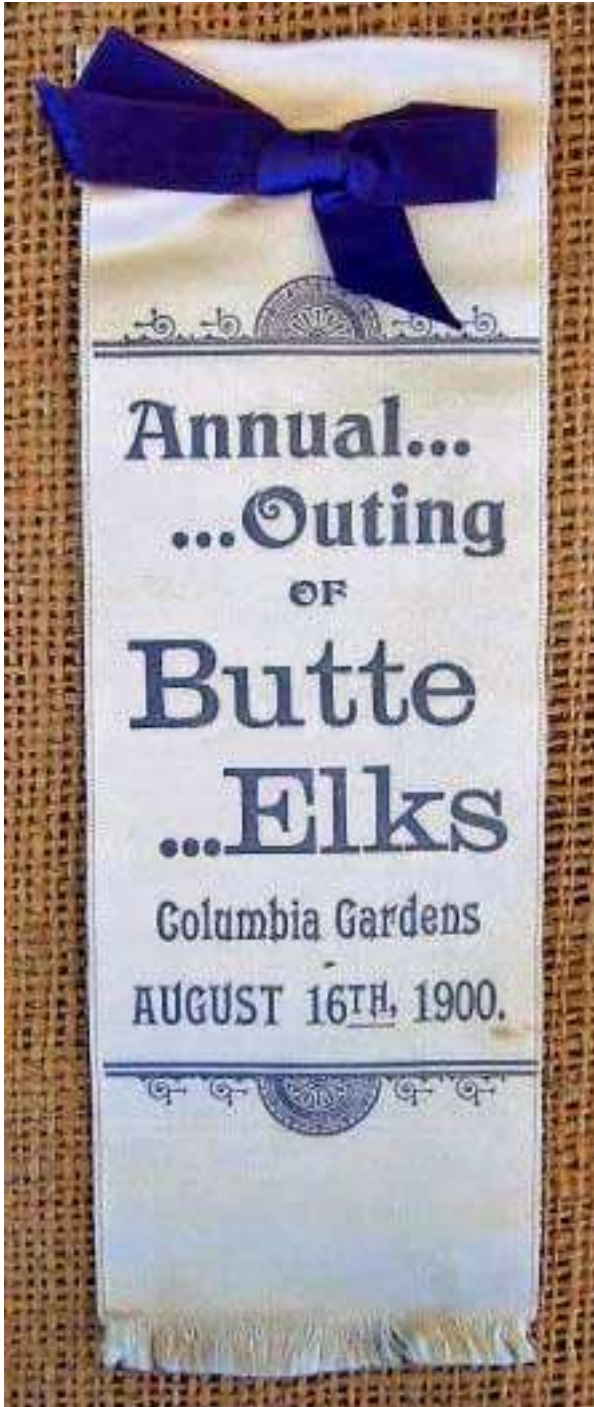


Elk's Activity Ribbon and Badges

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Fraternal badges can present an interesting addition to any mining artifact collection. In the October 1996 EUREKA! Bob Guthrie presented an insightful look at Elks badges issued for their Grand Lodge Reunions. Most of the badges were constructed of brass, copper, or pot metal, with silver, steel, and zinc being used on occasion. In some cases the badges were embellished with cloisonné enamelwork. Some had ribbons of either cloth or leather attached.



Because the purpose of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (B.P.O.E.) organization was for enhancing the social life of its members and not for providing aid to any particular group (such as miners) a large variety of professions were represented in lodges formed all over the U.S. Sometime after the Elks origination an effort was made to provide homes for its indigent members. Just because a lodge formed in a mining, milling, or smelting community there was no guarantee that a similar theme would be selected for a ribbon or badge and the 1905 Salida, Colorado badge is a good example of this although most certainly many of the members were WFM smelter workers.

The only ribbon I have been able to obtain is for an annual outing of the Butte, Montana Elks at Columbia Gardens in 1900 (figure 1). This was most likely a picnic affair at one of the largest amusement parks in the western U.S. At the time of the outing Columbia Gardens was owned by copper king William Andrews Clark. Columbia Gardens was established by Clark in 1899. The Clark estate sold the Gardens to Anaconda Copper Mining Co. in 1928. The Gardens lasted until around 1955. In 1955 open pit mining started on the Berkeley Pit and the Gardens disappeared.

Figure 1: Annual Outing, Butte, MT, 1900.

The Central City, Colorado Elks of Lodge 557 staged a fair and bazaar in 1901 (figure 2). The badge features a detachable steel mini-candlestick which can be used as a lapel pin. The same basic badge was used again in 1905 by Lodge 808 in Salida, Colorado for the State Convention but this time there was no candlestick adornment (figure 3).



Figure 2: Fair & Bazaar, Central City, CO, 1901, Lodge 557.



Figure 3: State Convention, Salida, CO, 1905, Lodge 808.

In 1905 the Third Annual Meeting of the Montana State Association was held at Anaconda. Featured on this badge is a panoramic photo of the Washoe copper smelter (figure 4).



Figure 4: State Convention, Anaconda, MT, 1905.

In 1906, Reno, Nevada Lodge 597 commissioned a badge featuring a gold pan and crossed pick and shovel (figure 5). The large pendant shows the Elks home in Reno. This badge was produced for those members attending the Grand Lodge Reunion in Denver, Colorado.



Figure 5: Grand Lodge Reunion, Denver, 1906, Reno, NV, Lodge 597.

Visiting Elks to the 2nd Pennsylvania state reunion in 1908 could expect to wear a 3-piece metal badge featuring a Scranton coal breaker (figure 6).



Figure 6: State Reunion, Scranton, PA, 1908.

At the 1909 Grand Lodge Reunion held in Los Angeles, California, at least two lodges chose to promote locally mined products. Lodge 533, in McAlester, Oklahoma, advertised the "Best Bituminous Coal in the United States," with a large pile of coal covering the mid-continent (figure 7). Lodge 453, in Hutchinson, Kansas, chose to use a representation of a large sack of salt (figure 8). Carey Salt Company, once a sponsor of The Shadow radio program, operated a large underground salt mine in Hutchinson for many decades.



Figure 7: Grand Lodge Reunion, Los Angeles, 1909, McAlester, OK, Lodge 533.



Figure 8: Grand Lodge Reunion, Los Angeles, 1909, Hutchinson, KS, Lodge 453.

The Minnesota State Elks Association held its 1923 meeting in Hibbing. The ribbon's pendant features a large power shovel typical of those used in the state's many open pit iron mines (figure 9).



Figure 9: State Reunion, Hibbing, MN, 1923.

Unfortunately not every Elks badge can be attributed to particular gathering. This may have just been an oversight of the badge committee or individual designer or not included because it's purpose was obvious to

the lodge. Lodge 861 in Webb City, Missouri ordered a dateless badge highlighting locally mined zinc common to the Missouri-Kansas-Oklahoma "Tri-state" ore body (figure 10). The badge features a sphalerite (zinc sulfide) crystal held in the Elk's antlers and a large heart-shaped zinc pendant. Zinc turned out to be a poor choice of metals for the pendant because it is easily erodible and the raised letters have nearly disappeared on my badge. The message on the pendant is "Webb City, Mo., Heart of World's Zinc-Lead District."



Figure 10: Webb City, MO, Lodge 861.

In Utah, the Elk's produced a dateless, no location, and state-wide badge featuring a beehive coke oven with various mined products identified on or around the oven (figure 11). Gold, silver, copper, iron, salt, and lead are listed. Someone forgot to mention coal.



Figure 11: Utah.



Figure 13: San Juan Elks.



Figure 12: Victor, CO.

Two other mining related badges remain a mystery as to when and where the gathering took place. A Victor, Colorado badge is incomplete, missing the ribbon (figure 12). The pin bar features three separate, early 1900s, Victor mining scenes; a two-compartment shaft with man cages, a panorama of Victor, and men working in a drift. The San Juan Elks medal is missing its ribbon (figure 13). The silver pendant features a smelter. Several smelters were in operation in the San Juan Mountains between 1880 and 1910. It's possible that this badge was intended to represent all the small lodges in this part of the state at a larger state or national meeting. Considering the workmanship of the Victor, and San Juan badges, it is likely that they too were created for Grand Lodge reunions.

Thanks to Bob Guthrie for reviewing the text and making beneficial suggestions. These badges are all in my collection.