

# Independent Order of Vikings

## A History

**An Historical Record**

**Put together to inform our current members  
and  
Future members  
About  
The history of the I.O.V.**

The Independent Order of Vikings was formed One Hundred and Fifteen years ago by eleven Swedish immigrants.

In this historical record you will be taken back through the years to the current status of the I.O.V. It is hoped that time will be taken to become better informed about the past and will work together for advancement of our fraternal order.

**Dedicated to:**

Scandinavians and friends of Scandinavians who have joined and will join the membership roles of the Independent order of Vikings.

**Compiled and Edited  
By  
Past Grand Chief  
Kristen N. Johnson  
With  
Executive Council Member  
Arlene R. Bulow**

# Independent Order of Vikings: a History

## **1890: The Foundation is Laid**

One hundred and fifteen years ago was a period of significant influx of Swedish immigrants into the Midwestern United States, particularly into the city of Chicago, Illinois. A section of the young city, located just north of the Chicago River, was where Swedish immigrant life was centered. Many of these immigrants were in their early twenties, having departed from their homes in Sweden for the “land of great opportunity”, looking forward to a new life of prosperity and success for themselves and their families. Upon their arrival, however, these young “Vikings” would have found themselves in completely foreign surroundings, confronted by both unfamiliar customs and a new language. It was therefore not surprising that friendship would have developed amongst these new Swedish-Americans as they met one another in the local neighborhoods, parks and on the beaches of nearby Lake Michigan.

From the center of Chicago, and proceeding north over the Chicago River, we can today still find Clark Street – referred to by Swedish-Americans in the early years as “Snusgatan”, or “Snuff Street”, named after the popular habit of chewing snuff. Continuing along Clark Street and just south of Oak Street at Washington Square Park we can imagine seeing small groups of these young Swedish men gathering together after long hours of work in the local industries, conversing with one another in their mother tongue, perhaps amusing themselves with games and sporting competitions.

These men, full of life and looking forward to a bright future for themselves and their families, soon became aware, however, of their insecurity should death, a debilitating sickness or any other misfortune happen to them. They thereupon resolved to establish a fraternal organization to help one another, both financially and communally. Such a decision was made, therefore, by a group of eleven Swedish immigrants during an informal gathering on June 2, 1890 in a bachelor room located at 86 Sedgwick Street.

At this meeting, which for all purposes may be referred to as the “Viking Founders Meeting”, were present the following: brothers Gustaf A. and Charles J. Carlson in whose boarding room the meeting took place, brothers, John E. and C. W. Meurling, brothers August and R. Wallden, Carl Herman Viktorin (or Victoreen ), August Johnson, Charles Henry, N. Hallers and Gustav Johnson. Officers were chosen as follows:

<i>Chairman (Ordförande)</i>	<i>John . Meurling</i>
<i>Vice Chairman (Vice Ordförande)</i>	<i>Carl Herman Viktorin</i>
<i>Recording Secretary (Protokoll Sekreterare)</i>	<i>August Wallden</i>
<i>Financial Secretary (Finans Sekreterare)</i>	<i>Gustaf A. Carlson</i>
<i>Treasurer (Skattmästare)</i>	<i>Charles J. Carlson</i>

Discussion also focused on the goal and purpose of this new association. It was agreed that it should be known by the name “Vikingarne” (Swedish for “The Vikings”). They also agreed that its primary purpose would be to aid and assist its members in times of “sickness and distress”. Therefore, a sick benefit and burial fund were established. Here then, on this important day, was laid the foundation on which our present Viking organization was established.

## **The Early Years: the development continues.**

The new “Vikingarne” organization was an extremely energetic one and during its first six months conducted an active campaign to recruit new members. Remarkably, by June, 1891, only a year after the organization’s first meeting, membership had grown to 234. This also necessitated moving the meeting place to larger quarters and in June they started conducting business in Turner Hall, located on the north side of the city. Vikingarne’s first official appearance as a group also took place in 1891. It was in the spring of that year that other Swedish societies in Chicago decided to erect a statue in memory of the well known Swedish botanist, Carl von Linné. Funds were raised and a reproduction of the Stockholm statue of this famous scientist was constructed. Located in Lincoln Park on the north side of Chicago, the statue was dedicated in May. The event was preceded by a parade consisting of the participating societies. Vikingarne captured first prize as the organization with the most representation from among the many societies which participated.

Initially, the initiation fee to join Vikingarne was set at \$2.00 with monthly dues of 25 cents. A benefit of \$3.00 per week was paid to sick members and a burial expense was established at \$50 for those unable to afford this cost. These amounts were soon raised to: initiation fee \$5.00, monthly dues 50 cents, sick benefit \$7.00 per week, burial expense \$100. The first death of a Viking member occurred on July 21, 1891 when Alfred Wernberg of 216 Townsend Street passed away due to typhoid fever. Being a bachelor, without funds or relatives, his entire burial expense was paid by the organization.

At a meeting held on December 12, 1891 a proposal was made that the name of the organization should be changed to "Independent Order of Vikings" (I.O.V.). No doubt the "Independent Order" name was suggested due to the fact that earlier the young men had investigated the possibility of joining the Independent Order of Foresters as a subordinate lodge but had decided that this was too expensive. The new name was adopted at a meeting on January 9, 1892. The necessary state incorporation application was forwarded to the Secretary of State in Springfield, Illinois and the required advertising notice placed in the newspaper. Incorporation of the new name was granted on May 28, 1892 and the organization originally known as Vikingarne now became known officially and legally as the Independent Order of Vikings. The Order consisted of only the one lodge, however, still known as Vikingarne. An active group indeed, it consisted of nearly 500 members who often took part as costumed participants in city parades, along with their colorful Swedish and American flags and a banner adorned with a Viking ship. The year 1892 was also the one in which our well-known I.O.V. seal, which we see on our correspondence and on the front page of our newsletter, was designed and produced.

Discussion at subsequent meetings became focused on the possibility of establishing a "Storloge" or "Grand Lodge", which would oversee and have jurisdiction over any future subordinate lodges established within the Order. As a result, the members of Vikingarne, on September 10, 1892, appointed a committee of twelve to establish the framework of this Grand Lodge. This included the drafting of the necessary constitution as well as the incorporation applications. This important committee included: Alex Holm, Charles H. Victorin, Alfred Carlson, P.A. Noren, Gustaf A. Carlson, A.M. Soderlin, Gust Johnson, N. P. Glimborg, Otto Anderson, Frank Lind, Gust Bird and August Wallden.

The Committee set to work. At a meeting, held less than a month later, October 3, 1892, a proposal was made to adopt the Constitution and Bylaws of the Grand Lodge. This date, therefore, October 3, 1892, is the beginning of the Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Vikings and these 12 members constituted our first gathering of the "Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Vikings". As a result, under these new corporation papers, the original "Vikingarne" now became the first subordinate Lodge of the Order, Vikingarne #1, with the date of its establishment set at June 2, 1890. This was the date, you may recall, of the very first meeting of our 11 founders. The lodge was conducting its meetings at this time in the First Swedish Odd Fellows Hall, 120 E. Chicago Avenue. By 1893 there was a new Constitution and By-laws which required a vote of the general membership before changes could take place or amendments added - a process essentially still in use today at our Biennial Grand Lodge Meetings.

### **The Organizing Years**

The success of this young Swedish organization in so short a time exceeded everyone's expectations. Even though the year 1892 proved to be an especially difficult one because of the large amount paid out in sick benefits, the I.O.V nevertheless participated in the city's gala celebration in which all associations in Chicago were invited to participate.

On October 17, 1892 the Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Vikings granted a Charter for the establishment of a second subordinate Lodge. The name chosen was Brage #2. Its first meeting place was located at Locust and Townsend Streets, north of Chicago Avenue. By 1893 it was already time for larger quarters and Brage #2 moved to Phoenix Hall on Division and Sedgwick Streets. By 1910 they had sufficient membership and funds to move into their own building, the North Side Viking Temple, at Sheffield Avenue and School Street.

The first representation sent from Brage Lodge #2 to attend a Grand Lodge Meeting on November 2, 1892, together with the representatives from Vikingarne #1, elected the first officers of the Independent Order of Vikings:

Grand Chief (Stor Hövding)  
Vice Grand Chief (Vice Stor Hövding)  
Grand Secretary (Stor Sekreterare)  
Grand Treasurer (Stor Skattmästare)

Alex Holm  
Carl Victorin  
Alfred Carlson  
P. A. Noren

There was also a fifth officer, elected or appointed, known as the Stor Organisatör, or Grand Organizer. Gustaf A. Carlson, one of the eleven founders of the I.O.V., was the first to hold this position. His responsibility was to oversee the organizing of new lodges. (It is interesting to note here that there were also several District Organizers employed by the I.O.V. It was their job to organize new lodges within their specific territory. As the I.O.V. expanded across the country, these men would advertise in local papers that a new lodge within the Independent Order of Vikings was going to hold its first meeting on a certain date at a local, rented hall. Swedish men of a certain age, generally between 16 – 50, it differed from lodge to lodge, were invited to become Charter members. These Charter members must be of “good character” and must undergo a doctor’s examination. The name of a local Swedish doctor, along with his telephone number and office hours, was usually included in the ad. Organizers were employed by the I.O.V. from 1892 through 1929.

Three more subordinate lodges were added within the next seven months: Drake #3 in March, Angantyr #4 in April, and Frej #5 in May of 1893, all located in Chicago. During these early years these five subordinate lodges managed their own burial funds, or what may be construed as benefits to beneficiaries of deceased members. State laws relative to the operation of fraternal benevolent societies were becoming more stringent, however. The Viking Order, therefore, appointed a committee to study the feasibility of having the Grand Lodge supervise the issuance of all death benefits to the membership. This study resulted in an application being submitted to the Insurance Department of Illinois in May 1895 for the approval of a new Charter.

A Certificate of Incorporation was thereby granted on November 30, 1895 by the Insurance superintendent, Bradford K. Durfee. This Charter, therefore, legalized the Grand Lodge to conduct a Fraternal Beneficiary Society and by virtue of this same issue, to provide life indemnity policies to members of the subordinate lodges. By 1895, therefore, the I.O.V. had become incorporated as a certified insurance company. The Viking Order has continued up to the present time to operate under this Charter, issuing life insurance certificates to its members in amounts up to \$10,000 in Illinois and other states in which it is licensed to operate. Periodic dividends have been paid out or have been credited to members in the form of added valuation to their original insurance certificates. (It should be noted that a holder of an Independent Order of Vikings insurance certificate, i.e. insurance policy, need not continue as a member of a subordinate lodge in order to have the policy remain in force. Should it be the desire of the policy holder to discontinue affiliation with his or her lodge, premiums for the policy may be made directly to the Grand Lodge office in Illinois.)

By the end of our society’s first 10 years of existence and as the turn of the century drew near there were a total of 7 subordinate lodges in the Order with a combined membership of a little over 800. During these first 10 years the Independent Order of Vikings had established itself as a truly viable organization with a cash balance of \$1,666.77 in the bank, \$286,100 insurance in force and much to look forward to in the new century. Death benefits were now issued by the Grand Lodge rather than from the individual lodges. A graduated assessment table was adopted. With continued growth of the Viking Order it was resolved at a Grand Lodge meeting in 1899 to publish a newsletter. The first issue of *Vikingen* (Swedish for “The Viking”), a monthly journal consisting of six pages, appeared May 15, 1899 with a subscription price set at \$0.50 per year. A great deal of detailed information, especially documentation relative to membership, along with commercial advertising, appeared in the early issues of this periodical. *Vikingen*, originally printed in the Swedish language, is now known as the *Viking Journal*, printed in English, and mailed to all members. Each lodge is invited to submit information about local happenings. It also provides the membership with important news about the society, as well as news of general Scandinavian interest.

### **The Growth Continues and the Vikings’ Valhalla**

After the establishment of the 8<sup>th</sup> subordinate Lodge of the Order, Odin #8, in April of 1900, it was decided to look beyond the city of Chicago into the outlying districts. The area around Moline, Illinois, west of Chicago and adjacent to the Iowa border, was selected as a likely candidate as it was home to a large

number of Swedes employed in industry there. It was also the headquarters of the largest manufacturer of agricultural equipment, the John Deere Company. Thor #9 was organized on April 20, 1901. Over the years Thor became so strong that in 1910 it hosted the I.O.V.'s first Grand Lodge Convention outside the city of Chicago.

Nebraska was the first state outside Illinois to organize a subordinate lodge. The choice is not surprising as there were many Swedish-Americans in the capital city of Omaha. Björn #20, established on February 26, 1905, held their first meetings in the A.O.U.W. Temple at 25<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets in South Omaha. This lodge would later merge, in 1940, with Orvar Odd #24 which had also organized in Omaha in 1905.

At the Grand Lodge Meeting held in 1908 a proposal was made by Grand Chief Frithiof Malmquist, well-known poet and Editor of the Swedish American Tribune newspaper in Chicago, to consider the establishment of a retirement home for members of the I.O.V. Grand Chief Malmquist donated his own fifty dollars, which was "salary for services rendered" during his term, as a first subscription for the creation of a fund to establish a retirement home for the elderly to be known as "Vikings' Valhalla". However, it was not until the following year, as records state, "that the spark that was to produce the flame was ignited". Incorporation of the Vikings' Valhalla Association took place in 1909 and was composed of members chosen from both the Independent Order of Vikings (I.O.V.), and the Independent Order Ladies of Vikings (I.O.L. of V.).

#### **Independent Order Ladies of Vikings (I.O.L. of V.)**

The history of the Independent Order Ladies of Vikings is a very interesting one. A suggestion of having a ladies-only lodge to compliment the men's Vikingarne #1 lodge was first made in January, 1892. A committee of 9 was set up within Vikingarne #1 to investigate this idea. Any decision they might have reached, however, was tabled indefinitely at the following meeting. It was not until April 1904, 12 years later, that the first ladies' lodge, Valkyria #1, was organized in Chicago. These women were primarily the wives and daughters of the members in Frithiof #6. Valkyria was an appropriate name for their lodge as it was the Valkyries who, according to the Norse sagas, were not only the female spirits who transported slain Vikings to Valhalla but were also considered to be the wives of living heroes. Human princesses were said to become Valkyries in the after-world.

Six additional ladies' lodges were started in 1904. All seven worked somewhat independently of one another, but all were dedicated to providing sick and burial benefits to their members. In 1905, the Independent Order Ladies of Vikings (I.O.L. of V.), met for the first time and held their first annual meeting at which all 7 lodges were represented.

Although working completely independently from the I.O.V., the I.O.L. of V. nevertheless followed the same rules and regulations as their male counterparts. The ladies even had their own Grand Lodge officers. Their first Grand Chief was Maria Bergquist from Ingeborg #4 in Chicago. By 1915 there were 34 lodges comprising the Independent Order Ladies of Vikings with 10 of these having more than 100 members; in fact, Valkyria had over 400. Total membership in the I.O.L. of V. in 1915 was over 3000. In 1934 an I.O.V. Constitutional amendment allowed Swedish women to become members in the I.O.V., thereby bringing about the subsequent demise of the Independent Order Ladies of Vikings.

During the next few years after 1909 there was considerable effort expended to acquire the necessary funds for establishing the Valhalla home. Although there were some members who did not like the idea of a home for older Viking members, the plans nevertheless continued. Subordinate lodges donated to the new Valhalla fund and all kinds of money-making projects took place: Christmas bazaars, various entertainments, and even a publication known as Gjallarhornet with advertisements provided much of the capital. A 15-member directorate, headed by Frithiof Malmquist, was established to oversee the Valhalla Association project. Following the recommendations of a committee assigned to find a suitable location for the new home, a down payment of \$3500 was paid for 36.5 acres on Deep Lake, near Lake Villa, Illinois in June, 1911.

But Deep Lake was not to be the site of the Vikings' Valhalla. Some members found it unsuitable and consequently another committee was formed to look instead into the purchase of a 42 acre estate located in Gurnee, Illinois, four miles west of the city of Waukegan, north of Chicago near the Wisconsin border. The

estate included an elegant manor house (which was later converted by the I.O.V. into a clubhouse), a guest house for a caretaker, as well as an outside open dance hall. The property was offered to the organization at a price of \$32,500 plus the land at Deep Lake. At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Valhalla Association on November 14, 1912 it was agreed to purchase the Gurnee site on the proposed terms. The contract stipulated that a down payment of \$5000 was to be paid on February 16, 1913 and an additional \$5000 on July 1. The balance was to come in annual installments with the final payment scheduled for July 1, 1916.

By 1920 both the Independent Order of Vikings and the Independent Order Ladies of Vikings met to decide a plan to have both Grand Lodges take over the Vikings' Valhalla. The I.O.L. of V. decided against this idea, however, and sold its interest in the Vikings' Valhalla to the I.O.V. At this time the Grand Lodge of the I.O.V. began to assess each I.O.V. member fifty cents per year in order to maintain the home.

After twice refusing the recommendations of the I.O.V.'s governing board (now called the Executive Council), to begin immediate construction on the property, the Grand Lodge finally approved a building with 12 rooms in 1925. The cornerstone was laid at an impressive ceremony on September 20, 1925 and viewed by some 12,000 spectators. The completed building was dedicated the following year on June 12, 1926 with again a huge attendance of some 10,000 people. An astounding sum of \$25,294.19 was collected on this one day for the purpose of defraying expenses of the facility. In addition, the individual assessment went from 50 cents to \$1.00 per year. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the I.O.V. was held on the grounds of the Valhalla Home in 1930 with a special picnic and concert. Enlargement of the building became necessary in 1931 in order to accommodate additional members. This brought the total number of residents to 35.

Vikings' Valhalla was in continual use as a home for the elderly for the next 37 years. But with the advent of tax supported institutions as well as the imposition of strict regulations relative to the operation of such retirement homes, the Viking Order voted to sell Vikings' Valhalla and the associated grounds to the township of Gurnee in 1969. Vikings' Valhalla is known today as the Viking School and serves as an educational building in the jurisdiction of the town of Gurnee.

The proceeds from the sale of the Valhalla Home property in 1969 were invested and the interest from these investments continues to be distributed annually to subordinate lodges on a pro rata basis determined by the number of insured members in each lodge. This fund was later to be called the "Aged and/or Needy Fund" and may be used by a lodge for the benefit of its members in time of need.

#### **Lodges Continue to Organize.**

By the end of 1910, only 20 years from the start of the first lodge, there were 36 established lodges and a membership of over 6700. To observe its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1915, the Order celebrated with a program at the Medinah Temple in Chicago on May 30<sup>th</sup>, followed by a lavish banquet that night at the Sherman House (hotel). On the following day the celebrations continued at the Vikings' Valhalla home in Gurnee, Illinois where thousands arrived either by automobile or by the extra number of trains which were required.

By 1919, almost 30 years after the first Lodge was formed, there were 59 lodges in six states with a combined membership of 9204. By 1929, almost forty years after Vikingarne #1, there were already 95 lodges located in 19 states with a total membership of close to 15,000. There was \$764,418.12 in Grand Lodge funds. Solvency of the insurance program was 125%. The I.O.V.'s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was celebrated in 1940 and found the organization with 114 lodges and a membership of 12,800. I.O.V. funds totaled \$1,389,716.59 with over \$3 million insurance in force. Many of the individual lodges held their own special celebrations that year. The original Chicago lodges recognized the event by a two day affair in October at the South Side Viking Temple.

There have been a total of 119 Charters issued for new lodges up to the year 2005. Unfortunately, over the intervening years, many of these lodges have either disbanded or have merged with a neighboring lodge. At the present time the Independent Order of Vikings is composed of 27 lodges located in 9 states with a membership totaling about 7300. Current insurance in force is over \$7 million. A more detailed listing of all I.O.V. lodges is provided at the end of this history.

#### **Membership Requirements.**

Originally, membership into the Independent Order of Vikings was restricted to only Swedish men,

generally between the ages of 21 and 45. The age limit was extended in later years. A constitutional amendment in 1914 allowed lodges to conduct their meetings in the English language in addition to the traditional Swedish. An important constitutional amendment was passed in 1934 which allowed the admission of women of Swedish birth or descent into the I.O.V. Freja #104 in Worcester, Massachusetts was the first all-women lodge. Interestingly, the next 5 lodges to be organized within the Order were women-only lodges. Even though there are lodges today in 2005 which still maintain their single sex status the majority now admit both sexes. In the year 1951 at a Grand Lodge meeting in Moline, Illinois the Constitution was amended which allowed members to be not only Swedes but any person of Scandinavian birth or descent. A spouse of a member also became eligible, regardless of national origin.

### **The Junior Movement**

Insurance certificates were instituted for the first time for children of Swedish descent in 1934. The child did not need to be related to a member of the Viking Order but had to fulfill the descent requirements. The amount of insurance was limited at first to \$500 for children between the ages of 1 and 16 years of age. Upon reaching 16 the insured could be admitted into the adult membership of a subordinate lodge without initiation fee. In later years the total allowable amount of insurance was increased and the Swedish requirement was expanded to include any Scandinavian nationality.

Junior Clubs were formed within individual lodges following the introduction of the Junior insurance program. Operated independently from the insurance benefit department but under the sponsorship of adult members in a lodge, these clubs were extremely active in many lodges. Junior officers were chosen and regular meetings held. Opportunities were available to participate in such activities as Junior drill teams, singing groups, theatricals, and all kinds of athletics. Many clubs had their own uniforms. Unfortunately, at the present time, there are only a few lodges which still have an active Juniors' Club of any kind.

### **In More Recent Years:**

#### **Scholarships**

Beginning in 1963 the Grand Lodge through its Scholarship Fund has distributed annual scholarships to high school seniors based entirely on scholarly merit. Thanks to the generous support of members, friends and subordinate lodges, the Scholarship Fund has now established itself as a self-sustaining benefit program within our Order.

#### **Uppsala and Minnesota Language Camps**

Starting in 1984 and running through 1997 the I.O.V. provided a 4 or 6 week grant to study Swedish at Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden. This special program was open to members 18 years of age or older. Starting in 1988 and continuing almost every year to the present time, our Junior members have had the opportunity to apply for full tuition grants to attend the Concordia Language Villages in Moorhead, Minnesota. This unique summer camp provides a one or two week Scandinavian cultural experience for our young people between the ages of 7 and 17.

#### **Viking of the Year, Junior Viking of the Year**

The I.O.V. established a Viking of the Year award in 1987 in order to recognize and honor those members of our organization who have proven to be exemplary both in their local lodge and community. Any member of the I.O.V. may nominate someone for this award. A three-member committee within the Grand Lodge reviews these applications and declares a winner. A special ceremony is held, at which time the Grand Chief awards the recipient with an inscribed medallion. A Junior Viking of the Year award was started in 1998 in order to honor a special Junior Viking who has worked for the betterment of his or her community and local lodge.

#### **Prescription Program**

A Prescription Card program was offered to members of the I.O.V. starting in 2000. It provides discounts averaging 12% - 15% on brand name drugs and from 45% to 50% on generic drugs. The card is welcomed at most pharmacies throughout the United States.

#### **Charities**

In 2002 the I.O.V. named the Burn Camps for Children as its national charity. Starting in 2003 a Triad of Need was promoted which focuses donations into the I.O.V. Scholarship Fund, the Juniors' Language Camps and the Burn Camps for Children.

### **I.O.V. Headquarters, Executive Council, United Trust Group Administration**

Up until quite recently the Independent Order of Vikings' Grand Lodge had always occupied office space within the city of Chicago and at one time even owned property located at 157 E. Ohio Street, just north of the Chicago River and in an area which is now known as "The Magnificent Mile. Forced to vacate its rented office space in 1986 from 200 East Ontario Street (one block from E. Ohio), the I.O.V. Grand Lodge moved to the city of Des Plaines, some 30 miles northwest. Until October, 1998 the office was staffed by 2 or 3 full-time employees who came under the jurisdiction of the I.O.V.'s Executive Council. In 1998 a contract was signed with an administrative company, the United Trust Group, of Springfield, Illinois, which presently manages the day-to-day administrative and financial operations of the I.O.V. The Executive Council is still the governing body of the I.O.V., however, and continues to make all final decisions in all matters.

Grand Lodge Meetings, i.e. Conventions, are held every two years in the month of June at a place designated at the preceding Grand Lodge Meeting. In more recent years, the location has been unofficially set by, but not restricted to, the home Lodge of the incoming Grand Chief. Delegates to the Grand Lodge Meetings are elected from each subordinate lodge, with the number from each lodge determined by the number of insured members in that Lodge. The primary business conducted at Grand Lodge Meetings involves voting on changes to the I.O.V. Constitution as well as the election of all I.O.V. officers and the 10 member Executive Council, all of whom hold office for two years.

### **Executive Council**

In the interim of Grand Lodge Meetings the transaction of all business of the Order is performed under the jurisdiction of the Executive Council, in close consultation with the United Trust Group, as mentioned above. For many years the Council met several times per year at I.O.V. headquarters in Chicago. In order to lower costs the number of meetings was decreased in the 1990's. At the present time the Council holds meetings 2 times per year at a host Lodge. The schedule and location are determined by the Grand Chief. The Executive Council consists of five officers and ten council members (for many years there were 12), who are elected at the Grand Lodge Meetings. Grand Lodge officers include Grand Chief, Junior Past Grand Chief, Vice Grand Chief, Grand Secretary and Grand Treasurer.

The Independent Order of Vikings has been a member of several local and national fraternal organizations including the National Fraternal Congress of America, Illinois Fraternal Congress, New England Fraternal Congress and the Swedish Council of America.

Additional noteworthy facts about the Independent Order of Vikings:

- 1) Starting in 1893, the Vikings rented 3 rooms for \$20 per month at 220 East Chicago Avenue in Chicago for use as a library and reading room. Swedish and English books, newspapers and periodicals were available from 6 a.m. till 11 p.m.
- 2) In 1892 Vikingarne #1 decided to design a banner which would be used primarily on formal occasions. Designed by artists Gus. Higgins and C.W. Dahlgren, it was considered to be the most beautiful of its kind in Chicago. It was unveiled during a parade in July of that year. The parade consisted of 500 men, either walking or on horseback. The parade led from Chicago Avenue to Clybourn and Cleveland Avenues, at which point everyone boarded the train or cabs for the ride to Sharpshooters Park located at Western and Belmont avenues.
- 3) Starting in 1915, at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the I.O.V., each Past Grand Chief was presented with an emblem which symbolized his special position within the organization. Since that time, every retiring Grand Chief has been presented with a similar Past Grand Chief's pin at the conclusion of our Biennial Grand Lodge Conventions. It is at this time that each is inducted into the exclusive Past Grand Chiefs' Club. It is also interesting to note here that in 1906 the delegates to the Grand Lodge Meeting subscribed to a fund in order to erect a suitable gravestone for the grave of the I.O.V.'s first Grand Chief, Alex Holm, in Graceland Cemetery, located on the north side of Chicago. The remaining difference in the cost of this stone was paid for by the members of Vikingarne #1.

4) Independent Order of Viking's Band

Even in the first year of the I.O.V. there was talk of organizing a Viking Band. It was not until 1896, however, when members of a Scandinavian band in Chicago, many of whom were already members of the I.O.V., asked for permission to use the I.O.V. name. Gustaf A. Carlson, who was already one of the first members of the governing board as the Grand Organizer, took particular interest in the band and became its first conductor. They played in parades, at concerts, I.O.V. meetings and for private parties, often without remuneration. There were about 30 musicians, all in uniform, with the base drum imprinted with their name: I.O.Viking's Band.

5) I.O.V. Staff Association

In 1914 Ellida Lodge #25 in Rockford, Illinois made the suggestion to have all of the ceremonial installation teams from the individual I.O.V. lodges assemble in Rockford. An invitation was sent out to all of the lodges and on Saturday, August 1, the costumed installing teams from nine lodges arrived in Rockford. Extra trains were required to accommodate the crowds. They marched proudly through the town streets, ending up at Svea Music Hall. The following day, they met again and unanimously voted to start the I.O.V. Stabsförbund, or I.O.V. Staff Association. Officers were elected. Their purpose was to unite all of the ceremonial installing teams into "a brotherly chain in order that they may more easily understand and appreciate the significance of their relationship with one another and therefore arrive at higher and more noble thoughts about the brotherhood that was represented by the Viking Order." The individual teams gave not only demonstrations of their installing procedures but even held contests between them. Prizes were donated by the Grand Lodge to the top three winning teams. The Association was a way to maintain tradition as well as provide interest and entertainment to the members. In addition, an annual meeting, parade and picnic took place which helped to spread the name of the I.O.V. throughout the neighborhoods. Each installing team paid \$5.00 to become a member of the Staff Association, with yearly dues set also at \$5.00.

### Conclusion

An abbreviated history of the Independent Order of Vikings was written in 1990 to coincide with the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Independent Order of Vikings held in Schaumburg, Illinois. Although not the current Historian of the I.O.V., I take great satisfaction in the fact that I was asked to update it to the present 2005, some 15 years later. During these intervening years so many of our truly dedicated members have left us for Valhalla. We dearly miss their wisdom, good sense and judgment, their lively arguments and good humors. It was certainly through their efforts, as well as through the efforts of many Vikings like them today, that the

I.O.V. is still an active and financially solvent organization. This is still true despite the decrease in the number of members and I.O.V. Lodges.

In reading through the primary source for this history, Runristningar, Independent Order of Vikings, 1890 – 1915, I can't help but come away with the feeling that they really enjoyed themselves in those early years. This is the only hard-bound book available which elaborates the early history of the I.O.V. Written in Swedish, it describes in detail the enthusiasm and dedication with which the early founders worked for the success of the I.O.V. It includes many photos of individuals, committees, buildings, as well as lists of officers and "Högsatta Kämpar" ("High-seated Warriors", or those who have died) in the early lodges. Financial statements for every year and most all of the lodges through #46 are presented. Perhaps the most remarkable group photos are the ones showing the ceremonial initiation teams: Vikingarne #1, adorned in their blue velvet tunics over velvet pants, a golden Viking ship embroidered on their chests, topped off with spiked helmets on their heads, all 16 of them. Likewise Drake #3, 21 members in mostly military-style uniforms, led by 4 elaborately costumed officers in velvet robes, embroidered tunics and towering helmets. Parades and picnics were attended by tens of thousands of participants. There were enumerable committees and meetings. The Independent Order of Vikings truly has had a glorious history.

I certainly would be remiss if I did not mention that the I.O.V.'s Historian for many years and one of its most active members, Edward Rune Myrbeck, Sr., a Past Grand Chief and a recipient of the Knight of the Royal Order of Vasa, First Class, was the primary author of the history written in 1990 and on which the current history is based. Now I turn another page to carry the work along, hoping that what he said at the conclusion of that first history may also apply at this time:

“Limited space, unfortunately, has not allowed the presentation of all the interesting and worthwhile details pertaining to the I.O.V.’s first 100 years. As we now begin our second hundred years it is profoundly hoped that we might all again experience a revival of that passionate enthusiasm which was so apparent at the beginning of our first 100 years. May our next historian find it so.”

## References

- 1) **Runristningar, Independent Order of Vikings, 1890 – 1915**, Chicago, Illinois. 392 pages.
- 2) *Vikingen*, Golden Jubilee Number, 1890 – 1940.

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Written by Kristen N. Johnson  
Grand Chief 1997-1999  
Executive Council, 1981-2001  
Completed herein, March 1, 2005

## All I.O.V. Lodges

<b>Lodge Name</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date Organized</b>
Vikingarne	1	Chicago, IL	Jun. 02, 1890
Brage	2	Chicago, IL	Oct. 17, 1892
Drake	3	Chicago, IL	Mar. 29, 1893
Angantyr	4	Chicago, IL	Apr. 27, 1893
Frey	5	Chicago, IL	May 17, 1893
Frithiof	6	Chicago, IL	Oct. 14, 1899
Runan	7	Chicago, IL	Dec. 15, 1899
Odin	8	Chicago, IL	Apr. 01, 1900
Thor	9	Moline, IL	Apr. 20, 1901
Svea	10	Chicago, IL	Jun. 22, 1901
Norden	11	Waukegan, IL	Dec. 14, 1901
Balder	12	DeKalb, IL	Feb. 28, 1903
Harald	13	Tinley Park, IL	March 10, 1903
Götha	14	Chicago, IL	Aug. 29, 1903
Ragner	15	Chicago, IL	Sep. 15, 1903
Hilding	16	Aurora, IL	Dec. 27, 1903
Bele	17	Chicago Ht., IL	Jun. 09, 1904
Ring	18	Batavia, IL	Mar. 06, 1904
Thorsten	19	Joliet, IL	Jan. 22, 1905
Björn	20	Omaha, NE	Feb. 26, 1905
Valhalla	21	Chicago, IL	Mar. 21, 1905
Njord	22	Kewanee, IL	May 18, 1905
Hjalmar	23	Evanston, IL	Nov. 19, 1905
Orvar Odd	24	Omaha, NE	Dec. 31, 1905
Ellida	25	Rockford, IL	Feb. 11, 1906
Yngve	26	Chicago, IL	Aug. 08, 1906
Ivar	27	Chicago, IL	Sep. 07, 1906
Vasa	28	Hammond, IN	Dec. 16, 1906
Thyr	29	Galesburg, IL	Dec. 22, 1906
Sigurd	30	Kenosha, WI	Jun. 01, 1907
Brejdablick	31	Milwaukee, WI	Jul. 26, 1908
Tryggve	32	Belvedere, IL	Nov. 29, 1908
Mimer	33	Geneva, IL	Nov. 28, 1909
Thyrfing	34	Crystal Lake, IL	Dec. 03, 1909
Neptun	35	St. Charles, IL	Dec. 19, 1909
Mjölner	36	Sycamore, IL	Feb. 05, 1910
Manhem	37	Highland Park, IL	Apr. 01, 1911
Nornan	38	Lincoln, NE	Jul. 18, 1911
Trudvang	39	Chicago, IL	Apr. 03, 1912
Thorbjörn	40	Berwyn, IL	Jun. 29, 1912
Engelbrekt	41	Chicago, IL	Oct. 03, 1912
Starke	42	Oakland, NE	Oct. 19, 1912
Helge	43	Omaha, NE	Jan. 11, 1913
Fridhem	44	Woodstock, IL	Feb. 06, 1913
Sten Sture	45	Chicago, IL	Dec. 11, 1913
Styrbjörn	46	Minneapolis, MN	Feb. 08, 1915
Lodbrok	47	Lake Forest, IL	Mar. 11, 1916
Erik	48	Laporte, IN	Apr. 05, 1916
Progressive	49	Chicago, IL	Jun. 23, 1916
Monitor	50	Indiana Harbor, IN	Aug. 12, 1916

John Ericson	51	South Bend, IN	Oct. 01, 1916
Heimdal	52	Elgin, IL	Dec. 17, 1916
Harmony	53	Chicago, IL	Dec. 29, 1916
Skandia	54	Gary, IN	Dec. 30, 1916
Trygg	55	Blue Island, IN	Feb. 04, 1917
Baltic	56	Rockford, IL	Mar. 18, 1917
Linné	57	Muskegon, MI	Mar. 16, 1919
Idun	58	Grand Rapids, MI	Nov. 15, 1919
Tegnér	59	Detroit, MI	Dec. 06, 1919
Drott	60	Flint, MI	Apr. 26, 1920
Torgny	61	Salt Lake City, UT	Oct. 15, 1920
Seaking	62	Cleveland, OH	May 01, 1924
Ansgar	63	Sioux City, IA	Dec. 07, 1924
Birger	64	Minneapolis, MN	Mar. 12, 1925
Ingjald	65	Jamestown, NY	May 01, 1925
North Shore	66	Evanston, IL	Nov. 30, 1925
Tryggve	67	Des Moines, IA	Dec. 04, 1926
Skandia	68	Portland, OR	Apr. 04, 1927
Frigg	69	Denver, CO	Apr. 29, 1927
Ingmar	70	Benton Harbor, MI	May 21, 1927
Tingvalla	71	Brooklyn, NY	Oct. 29, 1927
Thule	72	Buffalo, NY	Nov. 10, 1927
Lindy	73	Rockford, IL	Nov. 12, 1927
Grimborg	74	New York, NY	Dec. 16, 1927
Saga	75	Astoria, OR	Feb. 18, 1928
Jarl	76	Long Island City, NY	Mar. 10, 1928
Red Oak	77	Red Oak, IA	May 6, 1928
Nordic	78	Boston, MA	May 26, 1928
Gothic	79	Dorchester, MA	May 27, 1928
Svenske	80	Bridgeport, CT	Sep. 16, 1928
Vidar	81	Brockton, MA	Oct. 23, 1928
Birka	82	Worcester, MA	Oct. 26, 1928
Gripsholm	83	Lynn, MA	Oct. 29, 1928
Brovalla	84	Hartford, CT	Oct. 30, 1928
Stormking	85	Annadale, NY	Oct. 31, 1928
Olympic	86	Hoquiam, WA	Nov. 26, 1928
Kungsholm	87	Springfield, MA	Jan. 27, 1929
Waldemar	88	Concord, NH	Jan. 29, 1929
Thorwald	89	Kansas City, MO	Feb. 16, 1929
Eken	90	Clifton, NJ	Feb. 24, 1929
Edmund	91	Woburn, MA	Mar. 24, 1929
Stenkil	92	Braintree, MA	May 27, 1929
Heimer	93	Providence, RI	May 29, 1929
Kedjan	94	Montclair, NJ	Jun. 11, 1929
Thorvalla	95	Arlington, NJ	Jul. 18, 1929
Sleipner	96	Teaneck, NJ	May 29, 1930
Rocky Mtn.	97	Butte, MT	May 30, 1930
Sköld	98	Seattle, WA	May 10, 1930
Trotsig	99	Summit, NJ	Aug. 06, 1930
Andree	100	Los Angeles, CA	Nov. 02, 1930
Agne	101	Brooklyn, NY	Dec. 04, 1930
Einar	102	Arlington, MA	Mar. 25, 1931
Asgard	103	Jersey City, NJ	May 12, 1931
Freja	104	Worcester, MA	Mar. 13, 1934

Ingeborg	105	Hartford, CT	Mar. 29, 1934
Valkyria	106	Montclair, NJ	Jun. 13, 1934
Liberty	107	Englewood, NJ	Feb. 16, 1935
Bojan	108	Arlington, NJ	May 25, 1935
North Star	109	Chicago, IL	Oct. 22, 1935
John Morton	110	Philadelphia, PA	May 09, 1936
Victory	111	Chicago, IL	Dec. 17, 1936
Baltic Star	112	Rockford, IL	May 08, 1937
Beacon	113	Chicago, IL	Nov. 30, 1937
Diana	114	Jamestown, NY	Dec. 16, 1939
Sonja	115	Oakland, NE	Sep. 28, 1941
Linnea	116	Omaha, NE	Sep. 28, 1941
Blue Ridge	117	McKeesport, PA	Jan. 2, 1942
Clara	118	Moline, IL	Nov. 15, 1947
Vänskap	119	Crystal Lake, IL	Mar. 5, 1986

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## I.O.V. Ladies of Vikings Lodges

<b>Lodge Name</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date Organized</b>
Valkyria	1	Chicago, IL	Apr. 11, 1904
Freja	2	Chicago, IL	1904
Thora	3	Moline, IL	1904
Ingeborg	4	Chicago, IL	1904
Svea	5	Waukegan, IL	1904
Ragnhild	6	Chicago, IL	1904
Viktoria	7	Chicago, IL	1904
Ingeborg	8	Rockford, IL	1907
Astrid	9	Omaha, NE	1907
Alfhild	10	Chicago, IL	1908
Linnea	11	Chicago, IL	1908
Thyra	12	Chicago, IL	1908
Valborg	13	Chicago, IL	1908
Hulda	14	Evanston, IL	1908
Signe	15	Kenosha, WI	1909
Nanna	16	De Kalb, IL	1909
Thelma	17	Chicago, IL	1910
Saga	18	Galesburg, IL	1911
Vega	19	Milwaukee, WI	1911
Daga	20	St. Charles, IL	1911
Fridhem	21	Highwood, IL	1912
Sigrid	22	Chicago, IL	1912
Brynhild	23	Berwyn, IL	1912
Hildegard	24	Hammond, IN	1912
Gunhild	25	Chicago, IL	1912
Elvira	26	Rockford, IL	1912
Tekla	27	Geneva, IL	1912
Nora	28	Chicago, IL	1913
Olga	29	Aurora, IL	1913
Flora	30	Chicago, IL	1913
Hildur	31	Moline, IL	1913
Blenda	32	Batavia, IL	1914
Ragna	33	Indiana Harbor, IN	1914
Gunborg	34	Minneapolis, MN	1915

## I.O.V. Membership, 12/2004

<b>Lodge</b>		<b>Adults</b>	<b>40/75</b>	<b>Uninsured</b>	<b>Juniors</b>	<b>50 year Exempt</b>	<b>Total</b>
Brage #2	5	2	15	0	1		36
Drake #3	17	2	15	1	12		47
Thor #9	267	5	110	6	10		398
Harald #13	242	3	32	38	13		328
Ring #18	47	0	3	2	0		52
Orvar Odd #24	49	2	19	2	6		78
Ellida #25	196	4	34	26	24		284
Sigurd #30	43	2	21	5	2		73
Mimer #33	21	1	0	2	0		24
Neptun #35	10	0	3	3	9		25
Thorbjörn #40	7	0	3	0	6		16
Lodbruk #47	4	0	0	0	3		7
Baltic #56	113	4	12	0	13		142
Linné #57	990	15	231	129	3		1368
Idun #58	7	2	21	0	4		34
Ingjald #65	2266	68	350	44	105		2833
Skandia #68	6	0	7	0	1		14
Thule #72	10	0	5	0	5		20
Gripsholm #83	18	0	4	4	2		28
Waldemar #88	10	1	0	0	2		13
Edmund #91	18	1	3	18	11		51
Stenkil #92	320	26	65	38	29		478
Sleipner #96	9	0	1	0	0		10
Trotsig #99	1	0	0	0	2		3
Baltic Star #112	83	2	23	60	14		182
Diana #114	19	1	0	0	0		20
Clara #118	162	4	63	12	11		252
Grand Lodge	89	85	5	115	133		427
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5029</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>7243</b>	

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## I.O.V. Grand Chiefs and Home Lodge

<b>YEAR</b>	<b><u>Grand Chief</u></b>	<b><u>Home Lodge</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
1892	Alex Holm	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1893	Alex Holm	Vildngame #1	Chicago, IL
1894	Gustaf A. Carlson	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1895	Alfred Carlson	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1896	Alfred Carlson	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1897	Alfred Carlson	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1898	Alex Holm	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1899	Eric Forsell	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1900	Alex Borg	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1901	Adolf W. Johnson	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1902	Adolf W. Johnson	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1903	Herman Carlson	Frithiof #6	Chicago, IL
1904	Herman Carlson	Frithiof #6	Chicago, IL
1905	Frithiof Malmquist	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1906	Frithiof Malmquist	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1907	Frithiof Malmquist	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1908	Frithiof Malmquist	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1909	Frithiof Malmquist	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1910	John A. Linden	Frithiof #6	Chicago, IL
1911	Elis B. Edholm	Ivar #27	Chicago, IL
1912	Elias Olson	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1913	Henry Nordholm	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1914	C. E. Kronlof	Frithiof #6	Chicago, IL
1915	Adolf W. Johnson	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1916	Oscar Hanson	Ivar #27	Chicago, IL
1917	Gustaf F. Carlson	Drake #3	Chicago, IL
1918	Arvid Benson	Vikingarne #1	Chicago, IL
1919	Erik Thulin	Götha #14	Chicago, IL
1920	Albert Holmberg	Hjalmar #23	Evanston, IL
1921	John H. Nelson	Ivar #27	Chicago, IL
1922	Carl R. Olsen	Progressive #49	Chicago, IL
1923	Sexton Bruce	Drake #3	Chicago, IL
1924	Gustaf E. Carlson	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1925	Gustaf Westerberg	Ellida #25	Rockford, IL
1926	Felix Johnson	Brage #2	Chicago, IL

## I.O.V. Grand Chiefs and Home Lodge

1927	George R. Swanson	Frithiof #6	Chicago, IL
1928	John G. Swanson	Ring #18	Batavia, IL
1929	Swan Larson	Björn #20	Omaha, NE
1930	Allen Johnson	Drake #3	Chicago, IL
1931	Gustaf Seastrom	Neptun #35St.	St. Charles, IL
1933	Anders Hemwall	Odin #8	Chicago, IL
1935	Axel Sax	Hjalmar #23	Evanston, IL
1937	Ernst Lindskog	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1939	John Klingstedt	Ivar #27	Chicago, IL
1941	Algot Land	Brage #2	Chicago, IL
1943	Gust Mattson	Harald #13	Chicago, IL
1945	Oscar Nilsson	Frithiof #6	Chicago, IL
1947	Carl Segelstrom	Einar #102	Arlington, MA
1949	Eric Larson	Drake #3	Chicago, IL
1951	Nels Brandell	Ingjald #65	Jamestown, NY
1953	Carl Larson	Lodbrok #47	Lake Forest, IL
1955	C. Henry Widegren	Drake #3	Chicago, IL
1957	Arvid Soderberg	Thor #9	Moline, IL
1959	Trygve Lindahl	Ingjald #65	Jamestown, NY
1961	Anders Hedin	North Star #109	Chicago, IL
1963	Edward R. Myrbeck, Sr.	Stenkil #92	Braintree, MA
1965	Evert G. Winter	Lodbrok #47	Lake Forest, IL
1967	C.O. Rodney Lindwall	Orvar Odd #24	Omaha, NE
1969	Ted N. Mortivedt	Linné #57	Muskegon, MI
1971	Paul F. Swanson	Thor #9	Moline, IL
1973	Martin N. Hagstrom	Ingjald #65	Jamestown, NY
1975	Ruth E. Bergren	Harald #13	Chicago, IL
1977	C. Kenneth Frantzve	Harald #13	Tinley Park, IL
1979	George A. Arnold	Ingjald #65	Jamestown, NY
1981	Roy S. Engstrom	Trotsig #99	Summit, NJ
1983	Henry W. Stenquist, Jr.	Edmund #91	Woburn, MA
1985	Charles R. Matthews	Linné #57	Muskegon, MI
1987	Alex J. Arvia	Harald #13	Tinley Park, IL
1989	Philip A. Taft	Ingjald #65	Jamestown, NY

## **I.O.V. Grand Chiefs and Home Lodge**

1991	William F. Nelson	Thor #9	Moline, IL
1993	Gerald R. Swenson	Baltic #56	Rockford, IL
1995	Gordon A. Lindgren	Neptun #35	St. Charles, IL
1997	Kristen N. Johnson	Stenkil #92	Braintree, MA
1999	Raymond P. Knutson	Ellida #25	Rockford, IL
2001	Alex W. Bulow	Harald #13	Tinley Park, IL
2002	Raymond P. Knutson	Ellida #25	Rockford, IL
2003	Timothy L. Fagerstrom	Ingjald #65	Jamestown, NY

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